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China

CHINA TOURISM

THE '99 KUNMING INTERNATIONAL HORTICULTURAL EXPO

THE VA PEOPLE: LEGENDS AND REALITY

NEW WAYS UP MT. HUASHAN

THE VAST OPEN LAND OF YINCHUAN

227

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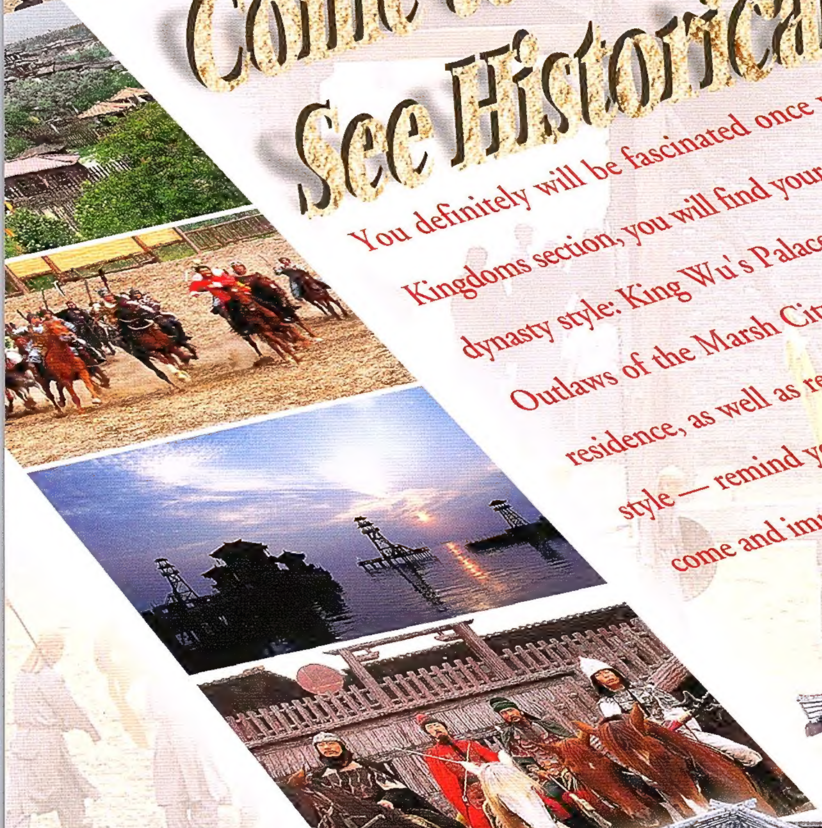

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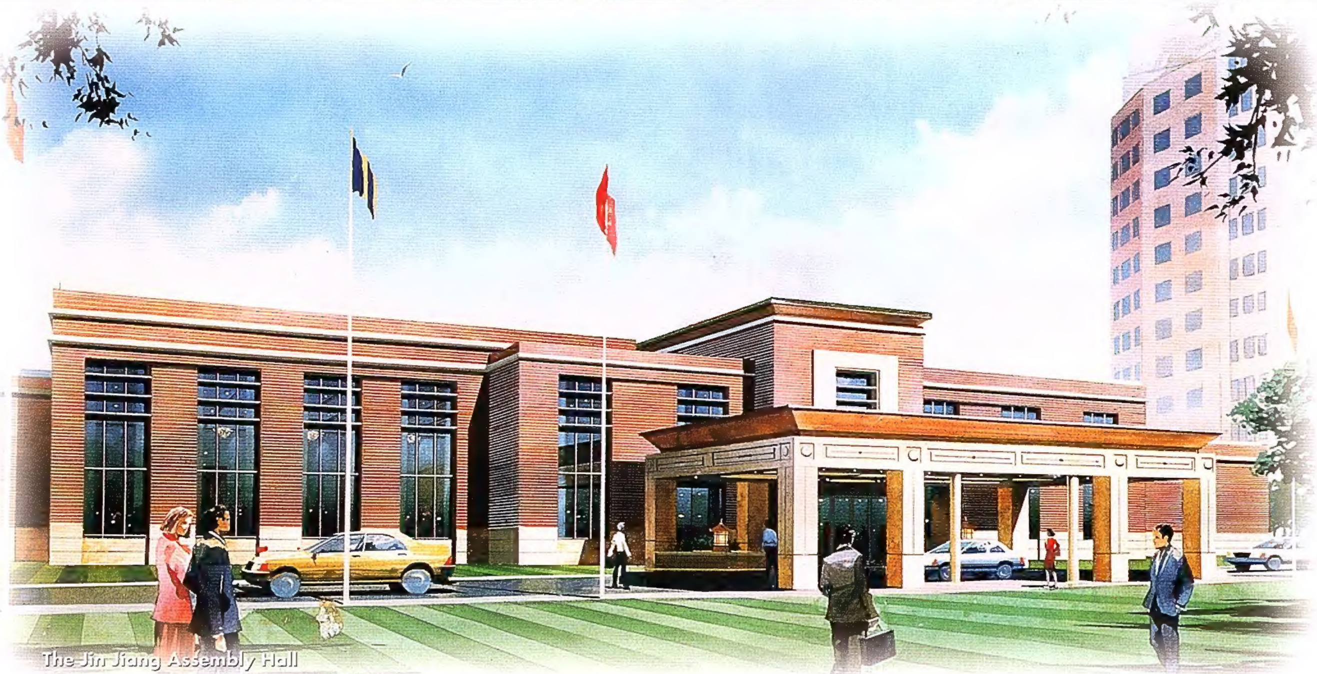
JIN JIANG HOTEL JIN JIANG HOTEL JIN JIANG HOTEL



The Jin Jiang Assembly Hall

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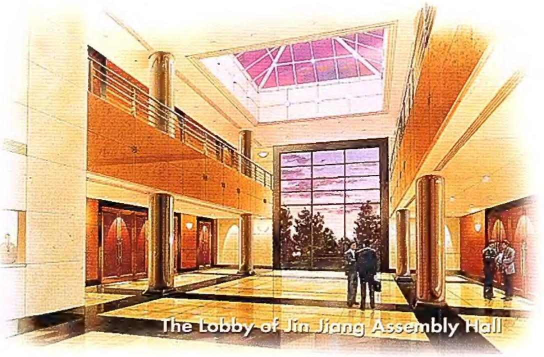

The Lobby of Jin Jiang Assembly Hall

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Venue : The Jindian Scenic Area, Kunming, Yunnan Province, China

Theme: Man and Nature — Marching into the 21st Century

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Host Country: The People's Republic of China Executive　Host: The Yunnan Provincial People's Government

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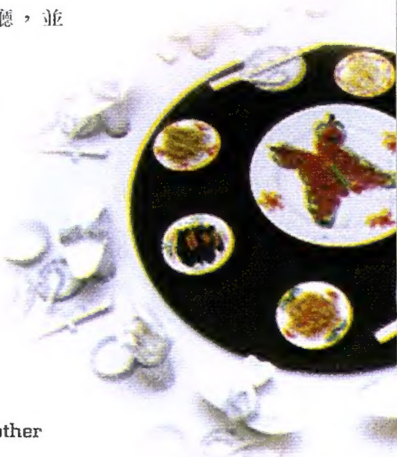

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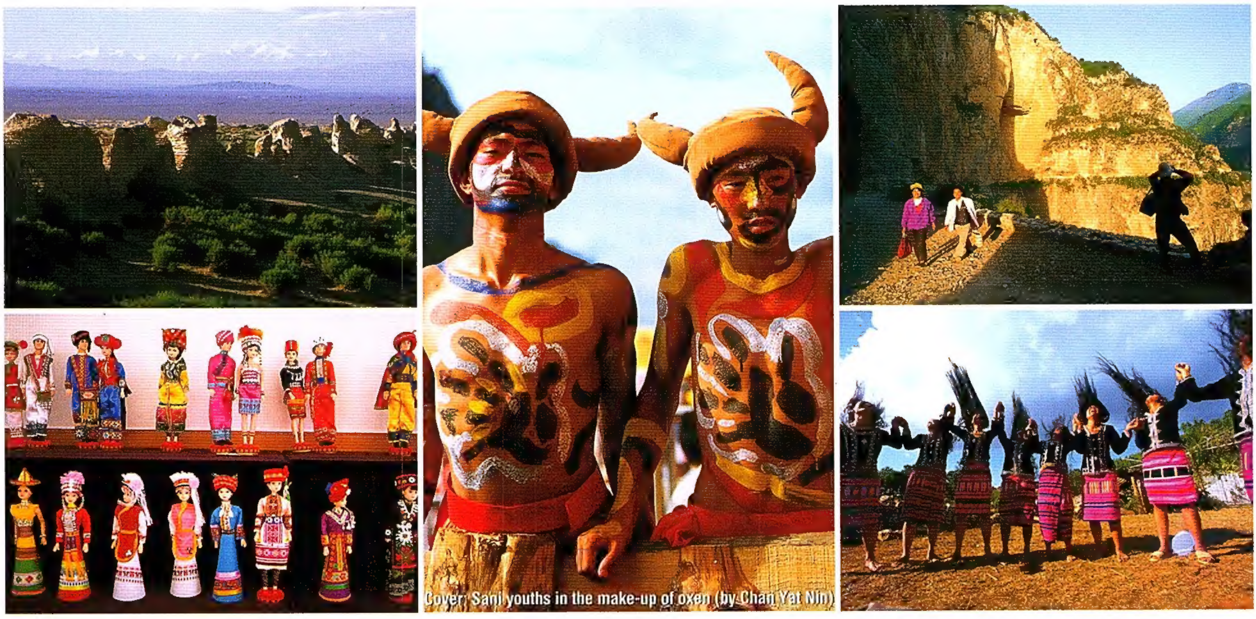

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FROM THE EDITOR

This year, Yunnan is again marking itself on the world map with the China '99 Kunming International Horticultural Expo. Apart from welcoming and fascinating its visitors with this grand occasion in the Spring City of Kunming, the province also offers remarkable and extraordinary ethnic customs and captivating landscape. Let's immerse ourselves in the magic of this colourful piece of land in the feature stories.

Or perhaps your interest is more historically related. Mianshan Mountain in North China's Shanxi Province was where the dutiful official, Jie Zhitui, and his mother were burnt to death 2,500 years ago. This legendary event is associated with the origin of the Qingming Festival, which falls on the fifth of April. Now the place has become a popular scenic spot, both for sightseeing and pondering the past.

The southern half of China is often the preferred choice for spring tours since its climate and scenery are both alluring. In this issue we explore four different routes in this part of China to show you the delights and wonders of spring.

For those who are northward bound, we recommend Huashan Mountain in Shaanxi Province. Nowadays, three routes have been developed for visitors to reach its main peak. Ascending the mountain by cable car may be the fastest and the easiest method, but you may miss the joy of conquering the formidability of the mountain on foot. Whichever way you climb up will be a triumph.

In Northwest China, the ancient Suoyang City stands on the Heixi Corridor in Gansu Province. Being surrounded by the tumble-down city walls and ruins of earthen houses, your thoughts will surely drift back to ancient times and stories.

Photo by Shan Xiaogang

HK-Macau-Guangdong Tourist Triangle

Tourism departments in Guangdong have made great efforts to strengthen co-operation with Hong Kong and Macau to turn the triangle area into a golden area of tourism. Five years ago, the Guangdong Provincial Tourism Administration, together with its partners in Hong Kong and Macau, established functional organisations to promote tours in the area. A database on hotels and scenic areas in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau is expected to be finished soon. The alliance and co-operation among the three areas will allow the triangle's tourism resources to come into full play and enhance the ability of the three in competing with other areas.

National Water Sports Contest to Be Held in Yueyang, Hunan

The China Water Sports Contest is to be held in Yueyang, Hunan Province in late September this year. The games will include many water sports programs, such as rowing, motor-boating, canoeing, water-skiing, and sailing. Besides, there will be performances such as dragon-boat racing, and a mass swimming rally of 1,000 people across the South Lake of the city.

Lao She Museum Opened in Beijing

A museum dedicated to Lao She, a leading modern Chinese writer, was opened in February at his former residence in Beijing. This is part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Lao She's birth. On display in the museum are Lao She's calligraphy works, his daily utensils, clothes and furniture, as well as a collection of his books. The writer published literary works of all forms, including novels, dramas and opera, totalling more than 8.5 million Chinese characters.

Lao She was a pioneer in the field of modern novel writing in China. He died on August 24, 1966. His family donated his former residence in downtown Beijing to the government, who spent 6 million yuan to renovate it into a museum.

Huairou: A Popular Place for Getaways

The Huairou Scenic Area in the northeast suburbs of Beijing attracts an increasing number of travellers, especially the city dwellers who want to get away for an excursion during the weekend or on a public holiday.

The county town of Huairou is 60 kilometres from the city centre of Beijing, with convenient public transportation. Besides bus 916 which leaves Dongzhimen Long-distance Station for Huairou every 15 minutes, minibuses are also available. Within the boundary of the county there are numerous scenic spots, including the Great Wall at Mutianyu, Yanqi Lake, Hongluo Temple, Purple Cloud Scenic Area and Qinglong Gorge. At Yanqi Lake, which is located outside the county town, one can enjoy various types of recreation such as speedboating, swimming and bungee jumping. Deep in the mountains, one can easily find one's own wonderland to enjoy nature with unusual peace and tranquillity.

Border Tours Increased in the Northeast

The border tourism in Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province has been expanding, with a total of 200,000 travellers reported last year. Income from the tourism industry increased dramatically compared with the previous year. Suifenhe, a city in the east of the province, bordering Russia, has opened many travel routes, including ones to Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other cities in Russia and Korea.

Xinjiang: Shopping Tours Booming

Overseas travellers on a shopping tour to Xinjiang have been increasing rapidly. The region's shopping tours started in 1991, when the former Soviet Union had just disintegrated and daily consumer articles were in short supply in that country. Citizens of Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan took advantage of the policy that tour groups are exempted from needing visas to enter China to shop. Over the past years, the source countries of this tourist programme have expanded to include more neighbouring countries, such as Russia and Georgia. Between 1992 and 1998, Xinjiang received 600,000 tourists from the Commonwealth of Independent States, who made up 40 percent of the total overseas arrivals in the region. The chartered flights numbered 2,650, and the total value of shopping exceeded 14 billion yuan.

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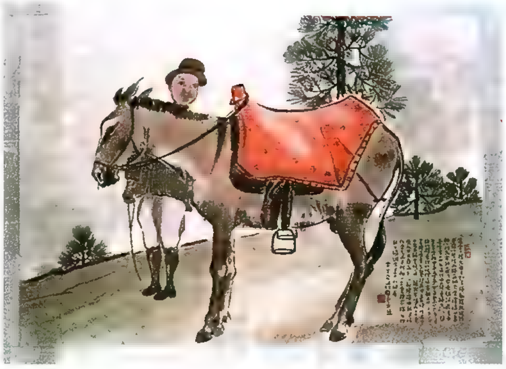

Event/Hong Kong

The New Exhibits of Chinese Painting & Calligraphy at Hong Kong Museum of Art

A new range of exhibits of more than 170 pieces, most of which are recents purchase of the museum, is now on display at the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

The exhibits include some Guangdong paintings and calligraphy, works of the young artists of the 20th century, and highlights of the master of Lingnan School, Chen Shuren. These new art works allow visitors to have a better understanding of the comprehensive image of Guangdong art.

Painters of Lingnan School are remarkable for drawing inspiration from real life situations, which presents their works with a note of modernity. This is the new approach to the creation of Guangdong art. Of all the paintings on display, Master Chen's works are undoubtedly most representative of Lingnan School.

The Young Donkey Driver (1945) by Chen is one of the typical works of this school. The poem in the picture describes the background of the young and poor donkey driver who needs to earn his own living. Chen expressed his sympathy and respect towards this young man through the poem and the painting. Chen liked to depict the miseries of the lower class in his works, which was a revolutionary breakthrough in art creation at that time, to show his personal sentiments.

News/Qinhuangdao

Qinhuangdao City — One of the Best Cities for Travel

In the National Travel Conference, the city of Qinhuangdao was selected as one of the Best Cities for Travel in China.

Qinhuangdao city is well-equipped with both "software" and "hardware" facilities for developing tourism. For the "software", the city aims at enhancing not only the quality of the practitioners of the industry, but also of the city's residents. As for the "hardware" facilities, Qinhuangdao City enthusiastically develops its tourist resources and upgrades its tourist products. The city has practically invested 590 million yuan to build the Beidaihe Waterfront Wildlife Park, Nandaihe International Amusement Centre, Xin'ao Underwater World, Laolongtou Aquarium and many others, creating 22 scenic regions and some 300 scenic spots featuring the Great Wall and the seaside.

The city has also focused on improving its transport facilities. For the past three years, it has put 1.4 billion yuan into road projects, including 20 major highways. Besides, the Shanhaiguan Airport has been renovated, the new Qinhuangdao Port has been opened, and 20 domestic air routes linking up different cities have been put into operation.

Hotel/Kunming

Bank Hotel Kunming

Backed by Bank Commercial Co. Ltd. and managed by Xi'an Silk Road (Sheraton) Hotel Co. Ltd., Bank Hotel Kunming is an ideal stopover for business travellers. It is conveniently located downtown, just a 15-minute drive from the Kunming Airport.

The 23-storey Bank Hotel Kunming houses 285 comfortable guestrooms, including the presidential suites, VIP suites, and deluxe suites, as well as the executive, Japanese-style and smoke-free floors, all perfect with advanced facilities. It is also complete with a large underground car park with more than 200 spaces.

Apart from having a luxurious banquet hall for 600 guests, a small banquet hall for 200-people gatherings, well-equipped conference rooms and a business centre, the hotel also offers excellent catering services featuring Western, Chinese and Japanese cuisine.

In addition, Bank Hotel Kunming also provides a wide range of entertainment facilities like tennis courts, swimming pool, sauna, gymnasium, night clubs and Karaoke to satisfy the demands of different guests.

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Event/Chengdu

Chengdu Introduces Its Ecotour Routes

This year, Chengdu is going to launch its ecotour activities, which involves the introduction of 32 travel routes in nine categories to showcase the rich ecological resources in the surrounding area.

Kicking off with a grand opening ceremony held in Longquanyi in mid-March, the festive occasion held in Chengdu introduces the local ecological travel products to its visitors: ecotours in Longquanyi, urban ecotours featuring the Funan River construction work and the breeding base of giant panda, forest tours, and skiing tours .

Furthermore, there are the Watering Festival at Dujiangyan, Ice Festival in Longchi and Flower Fair in Chengdu. On September 27, the city will host the grand celebration of World Travel Day and the World Heritage and Ecological Travel seminar to highlight the main theme of the occasion: Tourism — the Guardian Angel of cultural heritage.

Internet Cafe

A New Trend in Communication

As information technology is developing prosperously, E-mail has turned out to be the most convenient and economical way of communication, especially when you are on your journey. Using the Internet to communicate with your family and friends in different parts of the world is much cheaper than making long-distance calls, and faster than sending postcards.

Returning from trips in China last year, travellers reported that going on-line has become a trend in the country, and that the Cyber Cafe, which is called Internet Cafe there, can be found in almost every big city — a real benefit for independent travellers. The following are the details of some of the Internet Cafes in China for your reference:

Xi'an — two small cafes on Xiaozhai Road East (near Shaanxi Museum), charges: 10 yuan per hour;
— 2/F Bell Tower Telecommunication Office (opposite to the Bell Tower), charges: 20 yuan per hour.
Hangzhou — Blue Mountain Cafe on Hubin Road, beside the pedestrian bridge, charges: 20 yuan per hour;
— Wuzhou Hotel on Zhonghe Road, charges: 60 yuan per hour.
Suzhou — Internet Centre on Renmin Road (opposite to Gujiu Bookshop), charges: 6 yuan per hour.
Nanjing — China Telecommunication Internet Cafe on Dafang Alley, charges: 12 yuan per hour.
Shanghai — computer centres on Kangning Road, charges: 20 yuan per hour.

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EXPO'99
中国昆明

Yunnan Welcomes the World

China '99 Kunming International Horticultural Expo

Kunming is an immensely logical choice to host a horticultural exhibition of this kind. The city, known as the "City of Eternal Spring", has a pleasant climate and year-round flowers.
Yunnan Province is a treasure-house of botanical resources, with the most varieties of plants in the country.

Kunming's and Yunnan's attractions extend beyond the Expo '99. Alluring natural scenery and the fascinating culture of the local people undoubtedly add to the enticement of the Expo '99.

So come to Kunming now — Yunnan welcomes you!

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A Sea of Flowers and People

'99 Kunming International Horticultural Expo

Photos & article by Gao Yuanfeng

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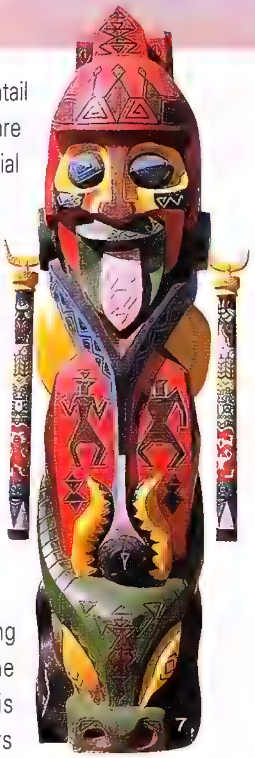
Visiting the '99 Kunming International Horticultural Expo has become a prime destination for a holiday this year in China. The exposition's opening ceremony and a welcoming banquet were held on April 30, along with a grand evening gala entitled "The Romantic Melody of Heaven and Earth". The China Central Television Station and radio broadcasters and over 1,600 reporters from around the world were there to cover the event live. The exposition opened to the public on May 1.

All the preparatory work on the 218-hectare site was finished early in the year and a preview opening was held on the Chinese Lunar New Year Day (February 16). By 2:30 p.m. that day, the number of visitors had topped 53,000. The Golden Monkey of Yunnan was chosen as the mascot of the Expo '99 and this "monkey" arrived at the gate very early that morning to welcome visitors.

The layout of the site has been set up to integrate the display areas with the unique topography. Almost 77 percent of the expo site is green space. The routes around the site allow visitors to use their time efficiently and see all the exhibits in the expo. To cover the whole site would entail a walk of about 10 kilometres. There are sightseeing vehicles available and special services for the disabled, as well as numerous restaurants serving both Chinese and Western food. There is also a cable-way link to the Jindian (Golden Temple) Scenic Area nearby.

During this half-year exposition, many cultural and entertainment activities are to be held, including economic and trade fairs, academic exchanges, special performances and special days for certain countries.

On my walk around the site during the preview opening, I first took the Garden Boulevard. Walking on this route, an incredible world of flowers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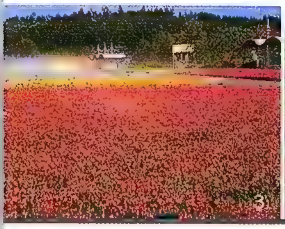


envelopes everyone. The Flower Clock, Flower Boat and Flower Pillar attracted the most visitors for photos in this area.

The China Hall at the end of this boulevard is the largest indoor exhibition hall on the site, and its theme is the "Splendid Chinese Ornamental and Horticultural Arts". The hall demonstrates the long history and profound culture of gardening in China.

The China Exhibition Area features gardens from every province, municipality and autonomous or special administrative region, as well as Macau, all in unique Chinese styles. The displays show the best of the ornamental and horticultural industry and the vast botanical resources of China, while at the same time highlighting the splendid cultural traditions and technological developments of various ethnic groups within the country.

Opposite the China Hall is the Grand Greenhouse, which displays various plants from tropical, temperate and polar climates. Another hall, surely holding great interest to visitors, is the Science and Technology Hall, which demonstrates both Chinese and foreign technologies in all fields of horticulture.

The main theme hall of Expo '99 is the Man and Nature Hall. Two terraces of different heights, surrounded by waters, have been built to express the main theme of the expo in the hall. Its interesting style enables the hall to successfully combine architecture with landscape, and fully display the hills, woods, water and buildings in one garden. The relationship between horticulture and humans, taking into account the ecology and environmental protection as well, is shown off here.

The International Hall is located at the eastern end of the Expo, about two kilometres from the entrance. Visitors can take a service vehicle to reach there. This hall contains precious and rare species of gardening plants and exhibits the achievements of horticultural developments of different countries and regions. The International Exhibition Area is composed of permanent outdoor gardens built by 33 countries and organisations, which evince the participants' traditional characteristics and gardening achievements.

The six theme gardens, namely the Tree Garden, Medicinal Herbs Garden, Potted Landscape Garden, Bamboo Garden, Tea Plantation Garden and Vegetables and Fruit Garden, which are closely related to the main theme of the expo, fully display their specific characters.

In the Tree Garden, there are many rare and precious plants, and plants which are on the brink of extinction, such as Hong parasol, Hongdou China fir of Yunnan, Baile cypress, Fragrant Pine and sago cycas. Across a waterway is the Bamboo Garden in which bamboo sprouts shoot up in the sunlight and mature bamboo casts elegant shadows in the moonlight.

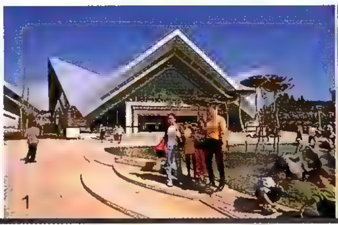
The "Eight Famous Flowers" of Yunnan have also been integrated into the site. The camellia ranks first with the most varieties, such as Hentiangao (hate-high-sky), Children's Face, Purple Robe, Lion Head and many others. These flowers of precious species are planted by the walkways, awaiting your admiring glances.

1. Even old women with bound feet visit the Expo '99.
2. The Golden Monkey of Yunnan is the mascot.
3. The expo roads are lined with luxuriant plants and flowers.
4. Taro is a perennial plant growing everywhere in Yunnan.
5. "Mount Taishan" in the Shandong Garden
6. During the preview opening, the China Hall was the main area open to the public.
7. A totem of an ethnic minority in Guizhou, China
8. Flowers are blossoming all over.
9. Dai girls welcome visitors at the gate.

Man and Nature

— Marching into the 21st Century

Photos & article by Zhixiong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An Interview with Mr. Guo Fangming, Director of the Yunnan Horticulture Exposition Bureau

Before the opening of the '99 Kunming International Horticultural Expo, I interviewed Mr. Guo Fangming, Director of the Yunnan Horticulture Exposition Bureau who is hosting the current exposition with the theme "Man and Nature — Marching into the 21st Century".

Correspondent: Mr. Guo, how did Kunming of Yunnan win the opportunity to host this international exposition in the competition among all the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities? Is it because Kunming is unique in some way?

Guo: Yes, I think it's right to say that the conditions in Kunming are unique. The city has a mild climate, not cold in winter and not hot in summer. It is also a city of flowers and "eternal spring". Yunnan Province has the greatest number of plant species in China due to its unique climate and variable geographical features. Its climate, vegetation, geography and culture are what make the province attractive to tourists.

Q: During the preview opening in February, I spent a whole morning touring the site, but covered very little of it. It's so large and has so many halls. Slow walkers may not be able to see everything in a day.

A: I'm afraid you may be right. You know the total area is 218 hectares! There are indoor halls, outdoor exhibition areas, theme gardens, and walkways, as well as service facilities, including security, customs and commodities inspection. Of the five indoor halls, the China Hall is the largest, covering an area of nearly 20,000 square metres. Inside are a trade exhibition hall, the hall of Chinese garden and horticultural history, and a multifunctional hall, in addition to the exhibition

halls of China's 34 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.

The International Hall ranks second in size, covering an area of 11,000 square metres which provides an area for different countries to display their gardens, and rare and precious plants. The Science and Technology Hall and Man and Nature Hall both have an area of 3,000 square metres. The outdoor area is immense. The theme gardens alone cover an area of 65,000 square metres, consisting of the gardens of trees, medicinal herbs, bamboo, vegetables and fruits, potted landscapes and tea plantation.

Q: The Medicinal Herbs Garden seems very interesting. You mentioned Yunnan's unique climate and geographical conditions support the growth of various plants. Do you have most of the medicinal herbs from the Chinese *Compendium of Materia Medica*?

A: We have at least half of it. This garden is not merely a herbal field but a garden built in southern Chinese style. In May, all the herbs should be luxuriant. By then, you will see medicinal herbs filling the garden, every one of which can be used for treating diseases. The flowers which blossom in different months form beautiful scenes all around you.

Q: Yunnan is the home of Chinese tea, so the Tea Plantation Garden must be very professional. Have you any programs related to tea for the visitors?

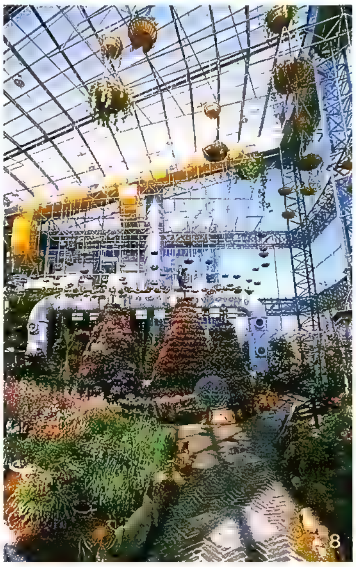
A: Oh, yes. Pu'er Tea is the "golden medal" of Yunnan, and Xishuangbanna is the hometown of wild tea trees, so of course we must have teahouses here. In addition to the Tea Art Demonstration Room and Tea Tasting House, we have an exhibition of tea culture telling the 2,000-year history of tea in China. Old stories are told about how Yunnan tea was traded to the ethnic minority groups in Southwest and Northwest China via the old tea trading route. Naturally there is also an introduction on how tea is planted, grown and processed. I have a feeling that the Tea Plantation Garden will become a place where visitors will linger.

Q: Among all the scenic spots in the garden, which are the best creative works?

A: Here, professionals have made great efforts to create many new works, such as the Flower Clock, Flower Boat, Flower Pillar and Flower Stream, all made of flowers keeping close to the main theme. There are also many special works like "Nine Dragons Gushing Water", "Aqueduct" and "Water-flowing Dam", as well as sculptures of "Lotus Leaves Swinging in the Wind", "Soul of Flowers" and "Stone of the International Horticulture Expo", all of which are very creative. The expo also offers over 100 kinds of souvenirs created by artisans.

Q: The final question. Could you tell me how the works were completed?

A: All the construction works were completed at the beginning of the year and the final stages of the fittings were made between the preview opening and the grand opening. Since many of the exhibits are living plants, they had to be planted so they could flourish before the opening of the expo. More than 300,000 trees, flowers and grasses of over 2,000 species were planted, many of which are rare and precious species. With 95 countries and organisations participating, it has been said that this is probably the first time in history an expo of this kind has such a large number of participants. Over 800,000 tickets were sold before it opened.



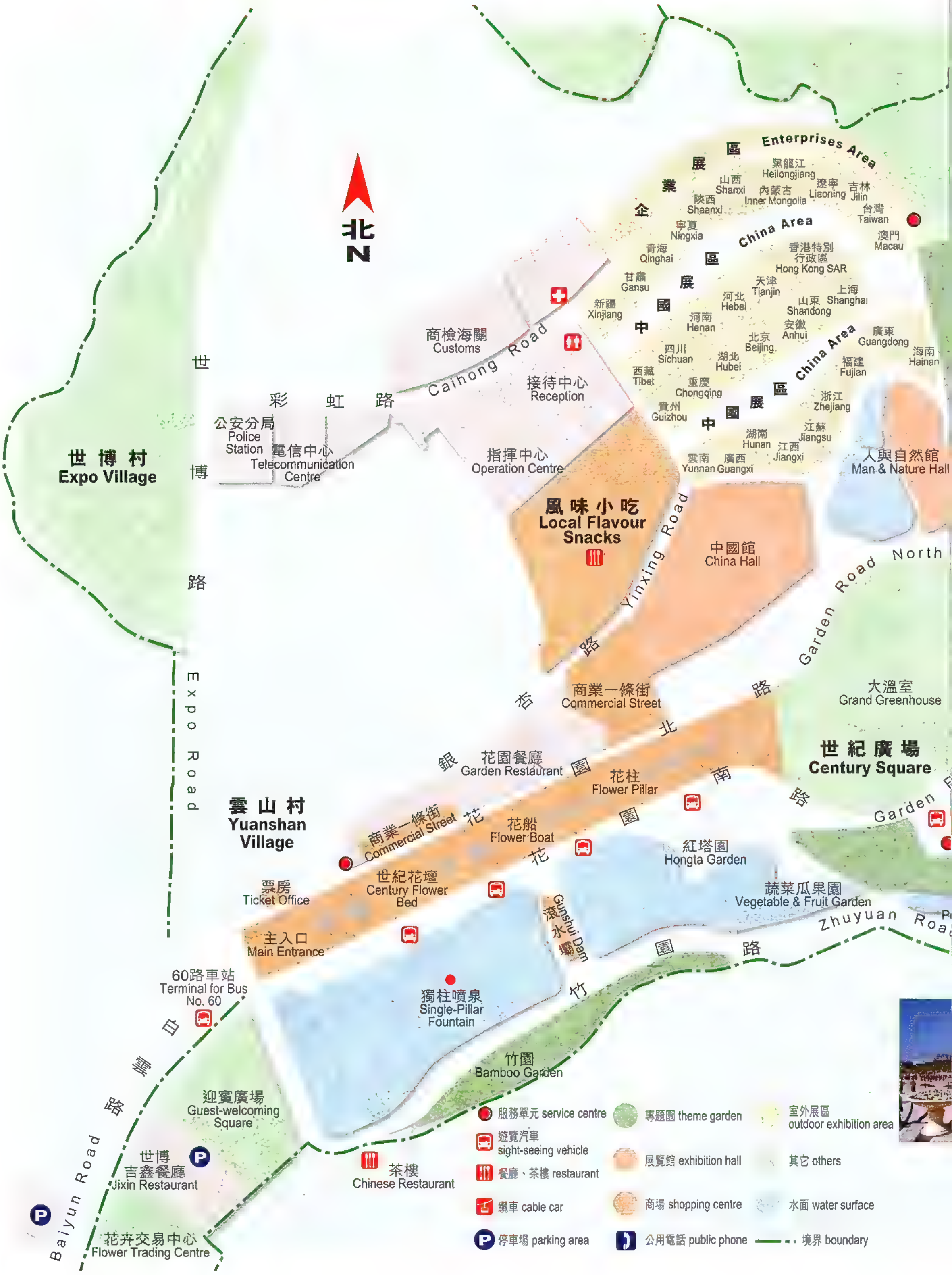
I would like to take this opportunity to invite visitors from all over the world to come to Kunming this year to visit the International Horticultural Expo. Let's share this wonderful occasion together.

Translated by M.Q.

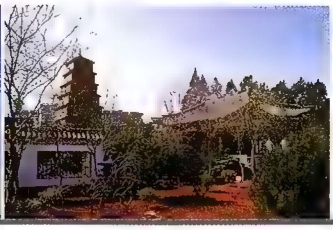
1. **Visitors taking photos outside the Man and Nature Hall**
2. **The burbling "Baotu Springs" of Jinan, Shandong**
3. **There are teahouses, coffee-houses, and Chinese and Western restaurants, providing dining and rest places for visitors.**
4. **The Souvenir Shop sells figurines of Yunnan's ethnic minorities.**
5. **The flowerbed with a fountain**
6. **The Grand Greenhouse is a ring structure with a courtyard at the centre.**
7. **Director of the Yunnan Horticulture Exposition Bureau, Mr. Guo Fangming**
8. **Most of the plants in the Grand Greenhouse, probably the largest in China, are of the tropical and subtropical variety.**

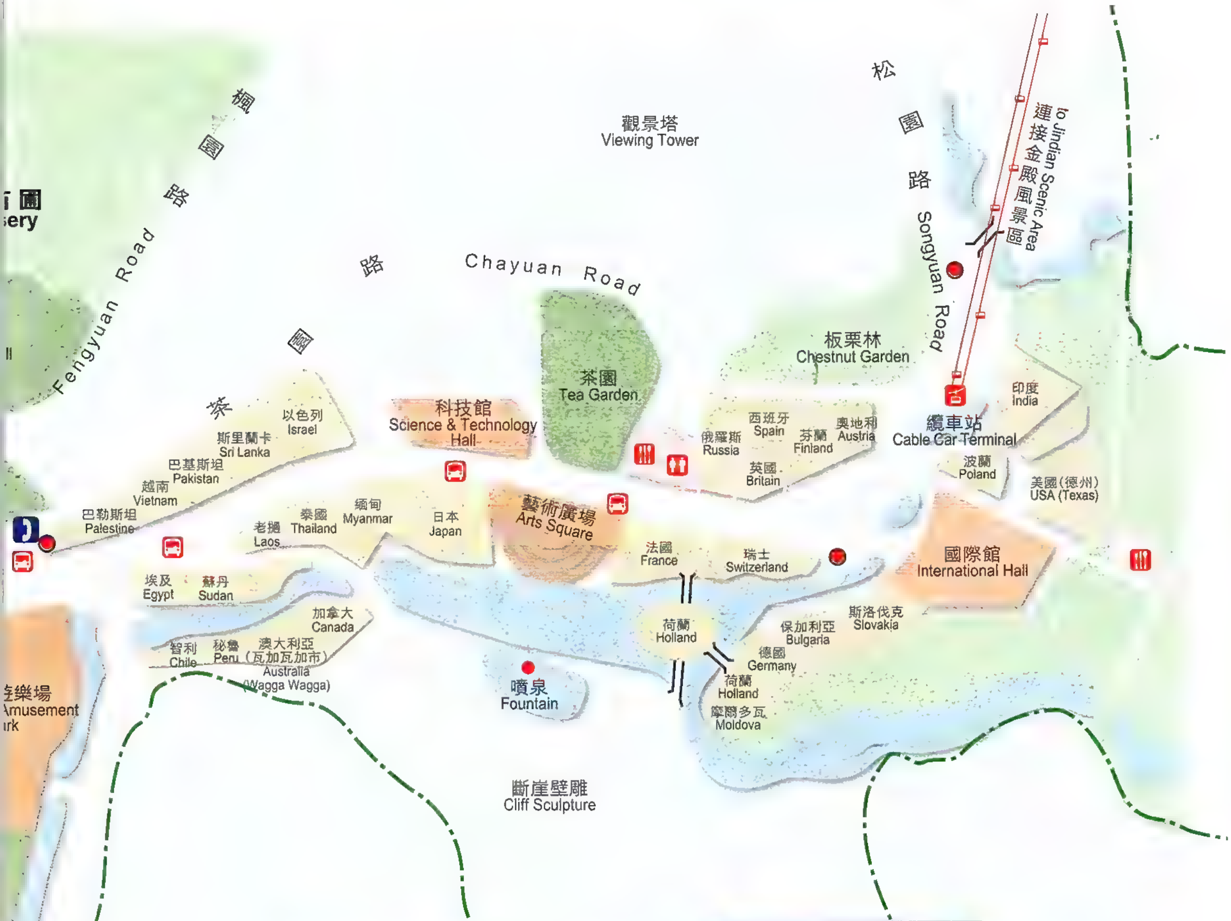
Yunnan Welcomes the World

Map of the International Horticultural Expo



北
N
企業展區 Enterprises Area
中國展區 China Area
黑龍江 Heilongjiang
山西 Shanxi
內蒙古 Inner Mongolia
遼寧 Liaoning
吉林 Jilin
陝西 Shaanxi
台灣 Taiwan
寧夏 Ningxia
澳門 Macau
青海 Qinghai
香港特別行政區 Hong Kong SAR
甘肅 Gansu
天津 Tianjin
上海 Shanghai
新疆 Xinjiang
河北 Hebei
山東 Shandong
河南 Henan
安徽 Anhui
北京 Beijing
廣東 Guangdong
四川 Sichuan
湖北 Hubei
海南 Hainan
西藏 Tibet
福建 Fujian
重慶 Chongqing
浙江 Zhejiang
貴州 Guizhou
江蘇 Jiangsu
湖南 Hunan
江西 Jiangxi
雲南 Yunnan
廣西 Guangxi
人與自然館 Man & Nature Hall
商檢海關 Customs
彩虹路 Caihong Road
接待中心 Reception
公安分局 Police Station
電信中心 Telecommunication Centre
指揮中心 Operation Centre
世博村 Expo Village
世博路 Expo Road
風味小吃 Local Flavour Snacks
中國館 China Hall
銀杏路 Yinxing Road
北園路 Garden Road North
大溫室 Grand Greenhouse
商業一條街 Commercial Street
世紀廣場 Century Square
花園餐廳 Garden Restaurant
花柱 Flower Pillar
南園路 Garden Road
雲山村 Yuanshan Village
商業一條街 Commercial Street
花船 Flower Boat
花花
紅塔園 Hongta Garden
票房 Ticket Office
世紀花壇 Century Flower Bed
滾水壩 Gunshui Dam
蔬菜瓜果園 Vegetable & Fruit Garden
竹園路 Zhuyuan Road
主入口 Main Entrance
60路車站 Terminal for Bus No. 60
獨柱噴泉 Single-Pillar Fountain
白雲路 Baiyun Road
竹園 Bamboo Garden
迎賓廣場 Guest-welcoming Square
世博吉鑫餐廳 Jixin Restaurant
茶樓 Chinese Restaurant
花卉交易中心 Flower Trading Centre
服務單元 service centre
遊覽汽車 sight-seeing vehicle
餐廳、茶樓 restaurant
纜車 cable car
停車場 parking area
專題園 theme garden
展覽館 exhibition hall
商場 shopping centre
公用電話 public phone
室外展區 outdoor exhibition area
其它 others
水面 water surface
境界 boundary

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楓園路
Fengyuan Road
茶園路
Chayuan Road
觀景塔
Viewing Tower
松園路
Songyuan Road
連接金殿風景區
to Jindian Scenic Area
板栗林
Chestnut Garden
茶園
Tea Garden
科技館
Science & Technology Hall
以色列
Israel
斯里蘭卡
Sri Lanka
巴基斯坦
Pakistan
越南
Vietnam
巴勒斯坦
Palestine
老撾
Laos
泰國
Thailand
緬甸
Myanmar
日本
Japan
藝術廣場
Arts Square
俄羅斯
Russia
西班牙
Spain
芬蘭
Finland
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Britain
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Cable Car Terminal
印度
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國際館
International Hall
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埃及
Egypt
蘇丹
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加拿大
Canada
智利
Chile
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Peru
澳大利亞（瓦加瓦加市）
Australia
(Wagga Wagga)
荷蘭
Holland
斯洛伐克
Slovakia
保加利亞
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Germany
荷蘭
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摩爾多瓦
Moldova
噴泉
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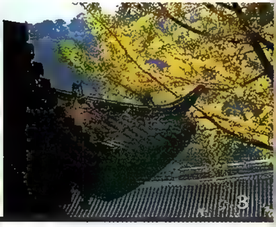
Cliff Sculpture

EXPO'99

中國 '99昆明世界園藝博覽會



1. Caohai Lake, Kunming (by Peng Zhen'ge)
2. A Buddhist pagoda in Xishuangbanna (by Li Zhilin)
3. Huating Temple in the West Mountain, Kunming (by Peng Zhen'ge)

Tips for the Traveller

Time : Opens on May 1, 1999 and closes on October 31, 1999

Site : Jindian Scenic Area, about 7 kilometres from downtown Kunming

Transport : Special-route buses from city centre to the Expo site; or taxi

Hotels Offering China Tourism Readers Discounts During the Expo Period:

Name	Tel./Fax	Room rate	Discount rate	Distance from Expo	Other services	Cuisine
King World Hotel	Tel : 313 8888 Fax: 313 1910	US$118 +15% sc	20% off (book 30 days in advance)	9.5 km	One-day tour to Kunming and Stone Forest: 160 yuan/person, including bus ticket, lunch, entry and guide fees	Authentic Yunnan
Kunming Hotel	Tel : 316 2063 Fax: 316 3794	US$118 +15% sc	20% off (book 15 days in advance)	5 km	One- or two-day tours available	Yunnan, Chaozhou, Korean
New Era Hotel (Xin Ji Yuan)	Tel : 316 3999 Fax: 316 3479	—	25% off (book 24 hours in advance)	30 minutes by car	Tours elsewhere in Yunnan; shuttle bus between hotel and Expo; Expo ticket sales	Yunnan, Guangzhou, Western
Zhongyu Hotel	Tel : 715 5188-1066 Fax : 718 9666	US$90 +15%sc	30% off (book 10 days in advance)	15 km	Expo ticket sales; free shuttle bus	Local specialities
Bank Hotel Kunming	Tel : 511 6236, 516 1167 Fax: 511 6096	US$138 +15%sc	40% off (book a few days in advance)	20 minutes by car	Multiple tour routes	Local specialities
Harbour Plaza Kunming	Hong Kong: Tel : 2121 1831 Fax: 2123 1810 Kunming: Tel : 5378735 Fax: 5391189	April 15-August 31: US$78+15%sc	40% off (suites only, book a few days in advance)	9.5km	Free US breakfast, airport transfers, fitness centre, pool, sauna; 2 p.m. checkout	Yunnan, Guangdong
Dali Manwan Hotel	Tel : (872) 218 8188 Fax: (872) 218 1742	RMB680	20% off (book 15 days in advance)	Close to Third Month Fair site	Special price car rental and one-day Dali tour	Dali and Bai ethnic food

Notes: Except indicated, the telephone area code is 871; sc = service charge

Bank Hotel's Five-day/ Four-night Programme: Expo '99 Kunming Tour

Schedule: Day 1: Meet at airport, arrive at hotel;
Day 2: Visit Stone Forest (Chinese food for lunch);
Day 3: Visit West Mountain, Yuantong Temple and Daguanlou (Chinese food for lunch);
Day 4: Visit the International Horticultural Expo, Flower Base and Golden Temple (Chinese food for lunch);
Day 5: Leave the hotel before 4 p.m.

Cost: US$230/person (double room)
Includes breakfast buffet, free airport shuttles, three-day tour, free use of fitness facilities, free entrance to hotel's nightclub.

Flights: Regular daily flights between Hong Kong and Kunming (US$370); regular flights between Shenzhen and Kunming, and Guangzhou and Kunming (US$250)

Information for air ticket: Hong Kong China Tourism Ltd. Tel: (852) 2516 9228

Flower Appreciation in Kunming

January: Plum blossoms at Black Dragon Pool Park, Kunming

February: Orchid Show in Xihua Garden; Tulip Show at Cuihu Lake; Flower Show in Jindian Park; Oriental Cherry Show at Mount Yuantong; Camellia Festival at Panlong Temple

March: Flower Fair at Dounan Township, Chenggong County

March-April: Azalea Show at Jindian Park

March-May: High Mountain Vegetation Tour at Mount Jiaozi

April: Peach and pear flowers in Kunming's suburbs; Eco- and agro-tour in Mount Liangyu, Chenggong County; Mountain Flower Festival at the Stone Forest, Lunan

May: Potted Landscape Show in Yulongwan and Climbing the Mountain to Enjoy Jasmine outing in Black Dragon Gorge, Anning County; Exhibition of Yunnan Vegetation in Jindian Park, Kunming

July-September: Vineyards Tour in Fumin County

September-October: Autumn Chrysanthemums Show in Grand-View Park

Ethnic Festivals During the Expo:

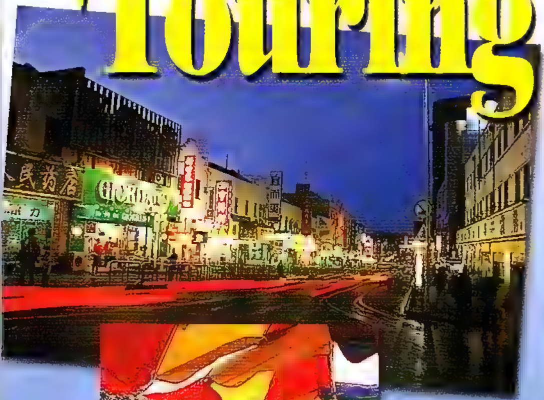
April-May: "Yunnan Ethnic Village" in Kunming; Dai ethnic group's Water-Splashing Festival in Spring in Summer Beach Park, Kunming; Bai ethnic group's Third Month Festival in Dali

August: Horse-racing Festival, Chenggong; Yis' Torch Festival in the Stone Forest, Yunnan Ethnic Village, Yangzonghai, Yulongwan, Spring in Summer Beach Park, Chejiabi Yi Village; Yis' Horse-racing Festival, Paomashan, Kunming; Miaos' Flowery Mountain Festival, Songming County

October: Va ethnic group's New Rice Festival in the Black Dragon Gorge, Anning City

Translated by M.Q.

'Touring Qingdao' CD-ROM



Qingdao is a beautiful port city on the Jiaodong Peninsula in East China's Shandong Province. The bright blue ocean and the layer upon layer of mountains make it a charming scenic resort. In its old city centre, the red roofs of the European-architectural buildings emerge amid green trees, showing their eternal beauty; in the new development area, skyscrapers rise with an increasing number, seemingly to be competing for height and might with one another.

Qingdao is a lovely cultural city. In its urban areas and rural outskirts there are numerous museums, historical sites, relics and scenic spots. The beautiful Mount Laoshan is one example.

With excellent photos and video recording, as well as a detailed description, this CD-Rom presents to you a splendid Qingdao, together with a useful guide for your future travel to the city.

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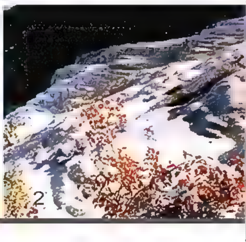
Yunnan Welcomes the World

Appreciation of Nature:

Scenic Spots in Yunnan



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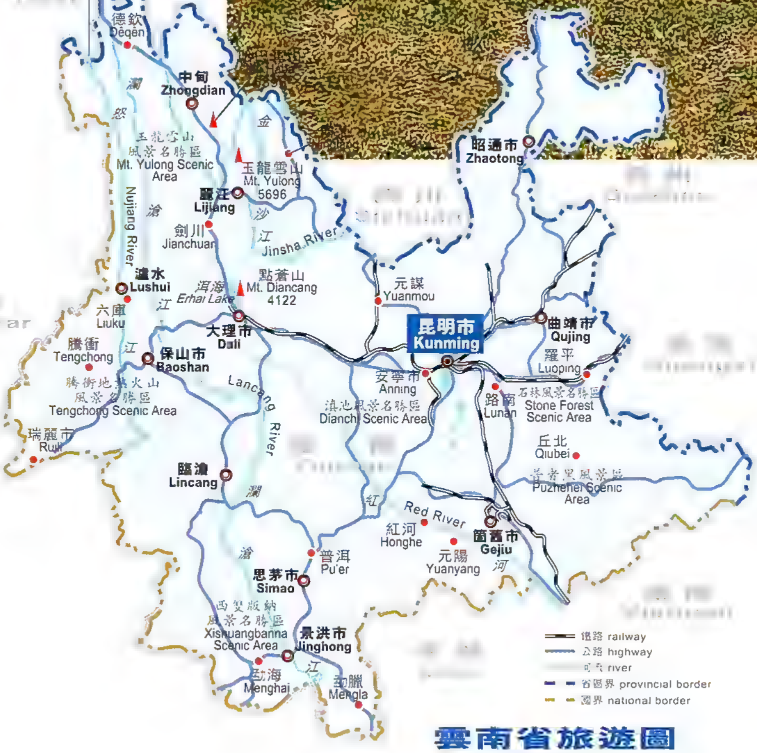
德欽 Dêqên
中甸 Zhongdian
瀾
怒
金
玉龍雪山風景名勝區 Mt. Yulong Scenic Area
玉龍雪山 Mt. Yulong 5696
麗江 Lijiang
滄
沙
江
Nujiang River
劍川 Jianchuan
Jinsha River
瀘水 Lushui
洱海 Erhai Lake
點蒼山 Mt. Diancang 4122
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江
大理市 Dali
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保山市 Baoshan
騰衝地熱火山風景名勝區 Tengchong Scenic Area
瑞麗市 Ruili
Lancang River
臨滄 Lincang
瀾
滄
思茅市 Simao
普洱 Pu'er
西雙版納風景名勝區 Xishuangbanna Scenic Area
景洪市 Jinghong
勐海 Menghai
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昆明市 Kunming
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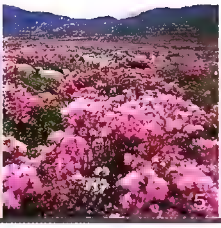
石林風景名勝區 Stone Forest Scenic Area
丘北 Qiubei
普者黑風景區 Puzhehei Scenic Area
紅
Red River
紅河 Honghe
個舊市 Gejiu
元陽 Yuanyang
河
鐵路 railway
公路 highway
河流 river
省區界 provincial border
國界 national border

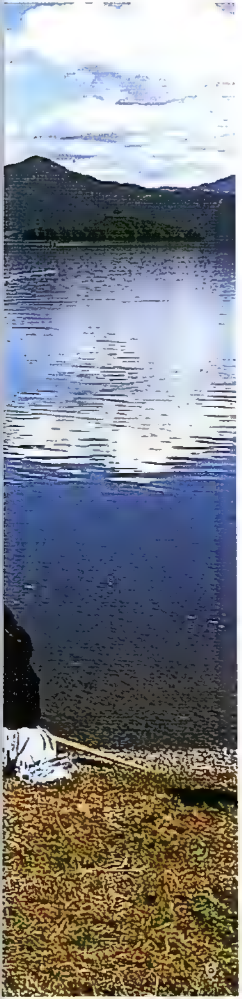
雲南省旅遊圖
Tourist Map of Yunnan

Kunming is famous for its spring climate and Yunnan is known as a land of flowers. Moreover, the province has around 300 sunny days a year. Also having a great number of natural wonders, this province holds enormous appeal to visitors. Here we list for our readers' reference the province's most famous areas.

Dêqên: The Earthly Shangri-La

The Dêqên Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is located in northern Yunnan, bordering Sichuan and Tibet. The environment is natural and well-kept, and the local Tibetans show a uniquely plain folk lifestyle. With great gorges, high snowy mountains, vast primitive forests and green grasslands, the topography here appears very similar to the Shangri-La described by James





Hilton in his novel *Lost Horizon*.

Major Tourist Wonders

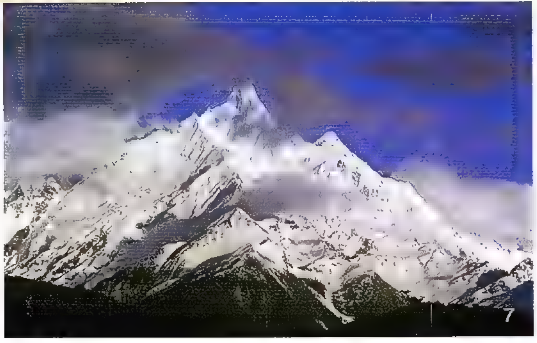
Gaindain Sumzen Monastery: Also called Guihua, the buildings of this monastery, five kilometres north of Zhongdian, are scattered over Foping Mountain's slopes. Main religious celebrations held here include Greeting the Buddha on the 15th day of the first month and the Dancing Spirits Festival on the 29th day of the 12th month of lunar calendar.

Bita Lake: With extremely clean water, it is hidden deep in a mountain forest about 20 kilometres east of Zhongdian.

Baishuitai: Said to be China's largest, these terraced fields of white calcium carbonate sediments are located in Sanba Township, 100 kilometres southeast of Zhongdian.

Meili Snow Mountain: At 6,740 metres, it is Yunnan's highest mountain. In the mountain is the unique 3,000-metre-long Mingyongqia Glacier.

Baimang Snow Mountain Nature Reserve: Scattered over 40 square kilometres of mountain slopes are many plant species of polar to sub-tropical zone types, and also many rare animals.



Tips: Travel in Dêqên requires a vehicle. Local travel agencies offer their own folklore and landscape travel routes.

Diqing International Travel Service:
Tel: (887) 822 5657; Fax: (887) 822 2364;
Deqin International Travel Service:
Tel: (887) 841 2688; Fax: (887) 841 2688.

Transport: Flights run regularly from Kunming to Lijiang, from where about 10 long-distance buses run daily to the capital of Dêqên prefecture, Zhongdian. Yet, there is only one bus from Zhongdian to Dêqên Town a day, so it is vital to book advance tickets. In June 1999, Zhongdian's new airport is due to open.

Accommodation:

Bita Hotel in Zhongdian: Standard room: about 450 yuan per day;
Tourism Hotel: Standard room: about 250 yuan per day;
Dêqên Meili Snow Mountain Hotel: Standard room: about 120 yuan per day.

Climate: The region has a polar zone climate: very cold in winter and cool in summer, with a strong sun and arid air. The best travel time is May to October.

Lijiang: Ancient City, Valleys and Mountains

Lijiang Prefecture is a land well-known for its natural beauty and unique folk customs. Here, you can enjoy Naxi music, the ancient Dayan Town, an eternally snow-covered mountain, a gorge, and a lake.

Major Tourist Wonders

Ancient Lijiang: Centrally located on the Lijiang Plain, this city is listed as a world cultural heritage by the United Nations for its historical and cultural features. Attractions include the many unique Naxi-style houses, crystal-clear streams crossing downtown and the ancient Naxi music and paintings.

Yulong Snow Mountain: Located about 15 kilometres north of Lijiang, it has 13 snow-covered peaks that wind like a dragon's back. Now, a cableway makes visits convenient.

Heilongtan (Black Dragon Pool): At the foot of Xiangshan Hill, north of Lijiang, this extremely clear pool reflects the Yulong Snow Mountain on a fine day. In Heilongtan Park, the 20-metre-high, Ming-dynasty Wufeng (Five-Phoenix) Tower is a typical example of ancient Naxi architectural art.

Lugu Lake: Located on the boundary between Yunnan's Ninglang Yi Autonomous County and Sichuan's

1. **Autumn at the foot of the Baimang Snow Mountain (by Luo Jinhui)**
2. **White Water Terrace in Zhongdian County (by Luo Jinhui)**
3. **Heilongtan (Black Dragon Pool) Park (by Li Dongwei)**
4. **The ancient Dayan Town (by Peng Zhen'ge)**
5. **Blossoming azaleas on the Dêqên Plateau (by Luo Jinhui)**
6. **Lugu Lake (by Chen Keqin)**
7. **Meili Snow Mountain (by Tan Ming)**
8. **Girls of the Mosuo ethnic group (by Luo Jinhui)**

Appreciation of Nature:
Scenic Spots in Yunnan

Yanyuan County, this lake, at 2,700 metres high, covers over 50 square kilometres. Living by this naturally clear lake are the Mosuo people who still keep some traditions of their matriarchal society.

Hutiao (Tiger Leaping) Gorge: Sitting between the Yulong and Haba Snow mountains, the Yangtse River's swift current roars through this 17-kilometre-long narrow gorge.

Tips: It is best to hire a taxi, particularly to visit Hutiao Gorge and Lugu Lake. Minibuses go to Yulong Snow Mountain and Heilongtan. To rent a taxi or join a group tour, please contact Lijiang International Travel Service: Tel: (888) 512 1802; Fax: (888) 512 1802.

Transport: There are daily flights from Kunming to Lijiang.

Accommodation:

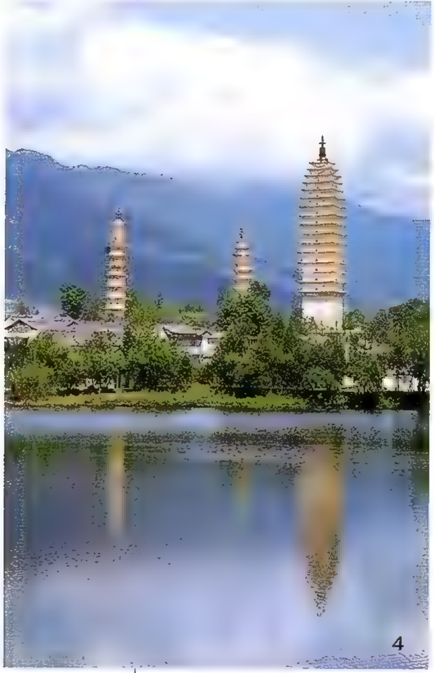
Gelan Hotel: Standard room: 400 yuan per day;

Clean pubs and inns, run by the Naxi people, conveniently located in the old city section, charge about 30 yuan per day per bed.

Climate: In summer, Lijiang is comfortably cool. The best time for travel is April to November.

Dali, Cangshan Mountain and Erhai Lake

The whole region around Dali, once a part of the ancient Nanzhao Kingdom, features beautiful mountains, rivers and lakes. A number of ethnic groups, including the Bai, Yi, Hui and Han, inhabit the region. It is an ideal place to enjoy both the natural beauty and unique local lifestyles.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Major Tourist Wonders

Ancient Dali: Situated at the foot of Cangshan Mountain, Dali's four classic city gates are well preserved. Along Huguo Road quite a number of restaurants serve Western food, thus earning it the name Foreigners Street.

Santa (Three Pagodas): In the Chongsheng Temple at the foot of Cangshan Mountain are three pagodas of the Nanzhao Kingdom, the tallest being built in 876.

Third Month Fair: In the middle of the third lunar month, an annual large fair is held west of the ancient city. The fair, running five to 15 days, is the Bai people's most important festival.

Cangshan Mountain: Also called Diancang Mountain, it has 19 peaks, all over 3,500 metres high, which lie along the bank of Erhai Lake. Cable cars now go to its snow line.

Erhai Lake: A clear and beautiful fresh-water lake of 250 square kilometres on the plateau, Erhai has abundant fish and shrimps. Sightseeing tours of the lake and its three islands are available.

Tips: Besides the above, there are also two famous Buddhist mountains, Jizu (Chicken Claw) and Shibao, in Baochuan and Jianchuan counties respectively. Also, a Nanzhao Folk Culture Islet on Jinzhen Island in Erhai Lake has recently opened to the public.

Transport: There are daily scheduled flights and long-distance buses from Kunming to Dali. Minibus services to the various scenic spots around Dali are available. Long-distance buses go daily from Dali to Baochuan and Jianchuan counties.

Accommodation:

Manwan Hotel: Standard room: from 200 yuan up;

Tel: (872) 218 8188;

Small inns: Large room for 10 people: 10 yuan per bed.

Climate: It is neither cold in winter nor hot in summer.

Southeast Yunnan: Elegant Rural Landscape

In this sub-tropical mountainous area, people mainly subsist on farming. For numerous generations, people of various ethnic groups have worked very hard and succeeded in merging their work and life into a harmonious unity with nature.

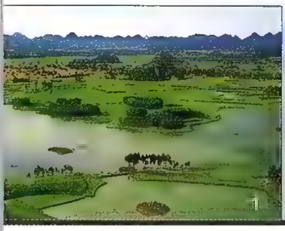
Yuanyang Terraced Fields: In the Ailao Mountain, which stretches across several counties in southeast Yunnan, flat land is scarce. There are primeval forests everywhere. The mountain people, mainly the Hanis, have sculptured the mountain slopes into terraced fields of various sizes and shapes. Most magnificent are those in Yuanyang County.

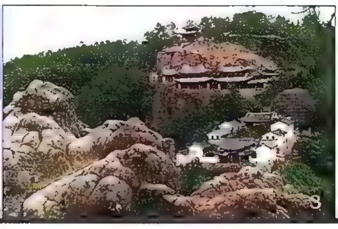
Best Tour Time: From mid-February to early March the paddy fields filled with water appear like mirrors under the sunshine.

Transport: Trains run regularly from Kunming to Gejiu, from where a bus takes three hours to get to Yuanyang. The terraced fields are just outside the town.

Accommodation: In Yuanyang, there are hotels and hostels, at rates from 50 to 150 yuan per day.

Tips: Remote villages offer greater photographic opportunities. Jinzhu Village in Tuanjie Township, 40 minutes' walk from Yuanyang, has particularly beautiful terraced fields.





1. Fields of crops in Puzhehei (by Chan Yat Nin)
2. Fishing on Erhai Lake (by Xu Jinyan)
3. Shibao Mountain in Jianchuan County (by Jiao Yantian)
4. Three Pagodas in Dali (by Tan Ming)
5. Terraced fields in Yuanyang County (by Wang Yizhong)

2

Appreciation of Nature: Scenic Spots in Yunnan

For a more panoramic view, Bada or Mali villages are best; take a taxi from Yuanyang. (For details, see Issue No. 193.)

Puzhehei: The Puzhehei landscape, well-known for its karst landforms and lakes, is now a favourite of the many Yunnan tours. (For details, see this issue.)

Duoyi River-Lubuge Scenic Area in Luoping

Some 250 kilometres east of Kunming, this spot, near Guizhou and Guangxi, has scenic wonders that include waterfalls over the Jiulong River, a karst peak forest and deep gorges, as well as huge fields of rape flowers in spring. (For details see Issue No. 212.)

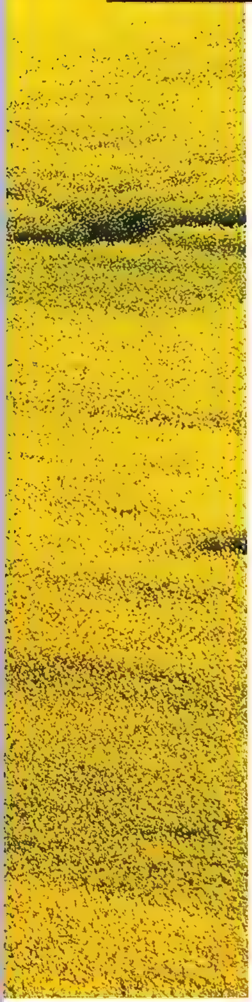
Tips: The Stone Forest in Lunan County is on the way from Kunming to Luoping. In Luoping, about 10,000 hectares of fields are sown with rape, whose yellow flowers bloom vibrantly in spring.

Transport: Trains and buses, taking four hours, run regularly from Kunming.

Accommodation: In Luoping, there are hotels of Wuhuan, Lubuge and Wenhua, offering standard rooms starting from 150 yuan.

Xishuangbanna: Tropical Rain Forest Scene

In Xishuangbanna there are primitive rainforests and clusters of Dai-style bamboo cottages and golden Buddhist architecture.



The nature reserve, with rich fauna and flora resources, has long been known as a "kingdom of animals and plants".

Major Tourist Wonders:

Wild Elephant Valley: There are facilities for visitors to watch the wild elephants in the Mengyang Nature Reserve, 48 kilometres north of Jinghong. (For details see this issue.)

Ethnic Folk Customs Garden: Located on the banks of the Liusha River south of Jinghong, the garden offers rare tropical plants and folk customs of various local ethnic groups.

Dai Villages in Ganlanba: Boats take visitors 40 kilometres downstream from Jinghong on the Lancang River to see villages. The annual Dai New Year celebration, the Water Splashing Festival, held in mid-April, is very lively.

Mengla Tropical Botanical Garden: This garden on the Hulu (Gourd) Islets on Luosuo River, in Lesser Menglun, 96 kilometres northwest of Mengla, has over 1,000 rare species of trees.

Tips: There are many Buddhist sites of interest, such as the Manfeilong Pagoda, the Octagonal Pavilion in Jingzhen and the Man'ge Buddhist Temple.

Transport: Scheduled flights of 40 minutes run daily from Kunming to Jinghong. Long-distance buses take two days. Special buses go from Jinghong to surrounding counties.

Accommodation: In Jinghong, there are hotels rated from two to four stars; charges start from 200 yuan. Among these are:

Daiyuan Hotel (four-star): Tel: (691) 212 3888;

Banna Hotel (two-star): Tel: (691) 212 2086.

Climate: The tropical monsoon climate means summers are rainy, very hot and humid. In winter, it is generally dry and warm.

Kunming: A Spring City with Flowers Everywhere

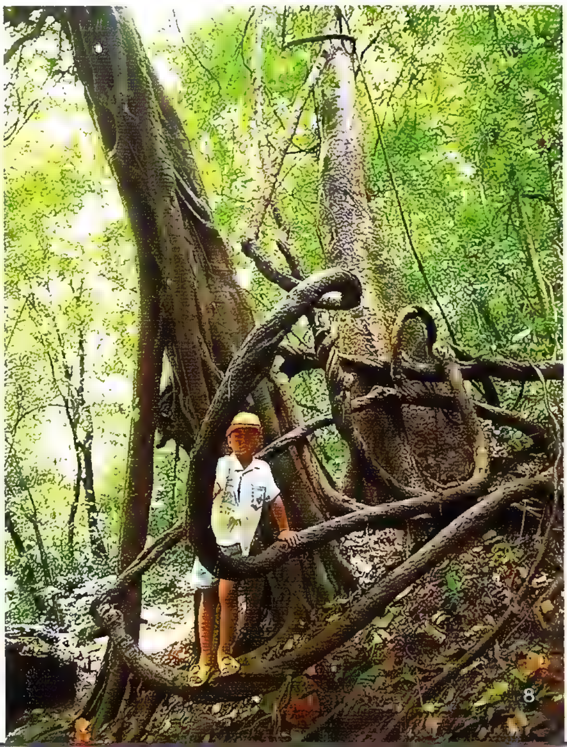
Touring Kunming any time of the year is pleasant because the climate there is always like spring and flowers bloom year-round. Moreover, the rugged mountains and clear waters around the city have great appeal to all visitors.

Tourist Wonders:

Both transportation and accommodation are very convenient to see most of Kunming's popular scenic spots, including Xishan (West Hill) Park, Haigeng Park and Grand-View Tower by the Dianchi Lake; Cuihu Lake and Yuantong Mountain.

Scenic spots out of the city, such as Stone Forest, Earth Forest and Fuxian Lake are natural, and better preserved.

Translated by Z. G. Li



1. Fuxian Lake (by Peng Zhen'ge)
2. A Buddhist temple in the Dai style (by Wang Miao)
3. Xishuangbanna, green all year round (by Chan Yat Nin)
4. Baiyukou of Dianchi Lake (by Shi Baoxiu)
5. Sea gulls at Cuihu Lake (by Shi Baoxiu)
6. Earth Forest in Yuanmou County (by Tan Ming)
7. Rape flowers in Luoping County (by Liu Jianhua)
8. In Xishuangbanna's tropical rain forest (by Chan Yat Nin)

Puzhehei

Idyllic Landscape and Farmland

Photos by Chan Yat Nin, Liu Jianming   Article by Chan Yat Nin

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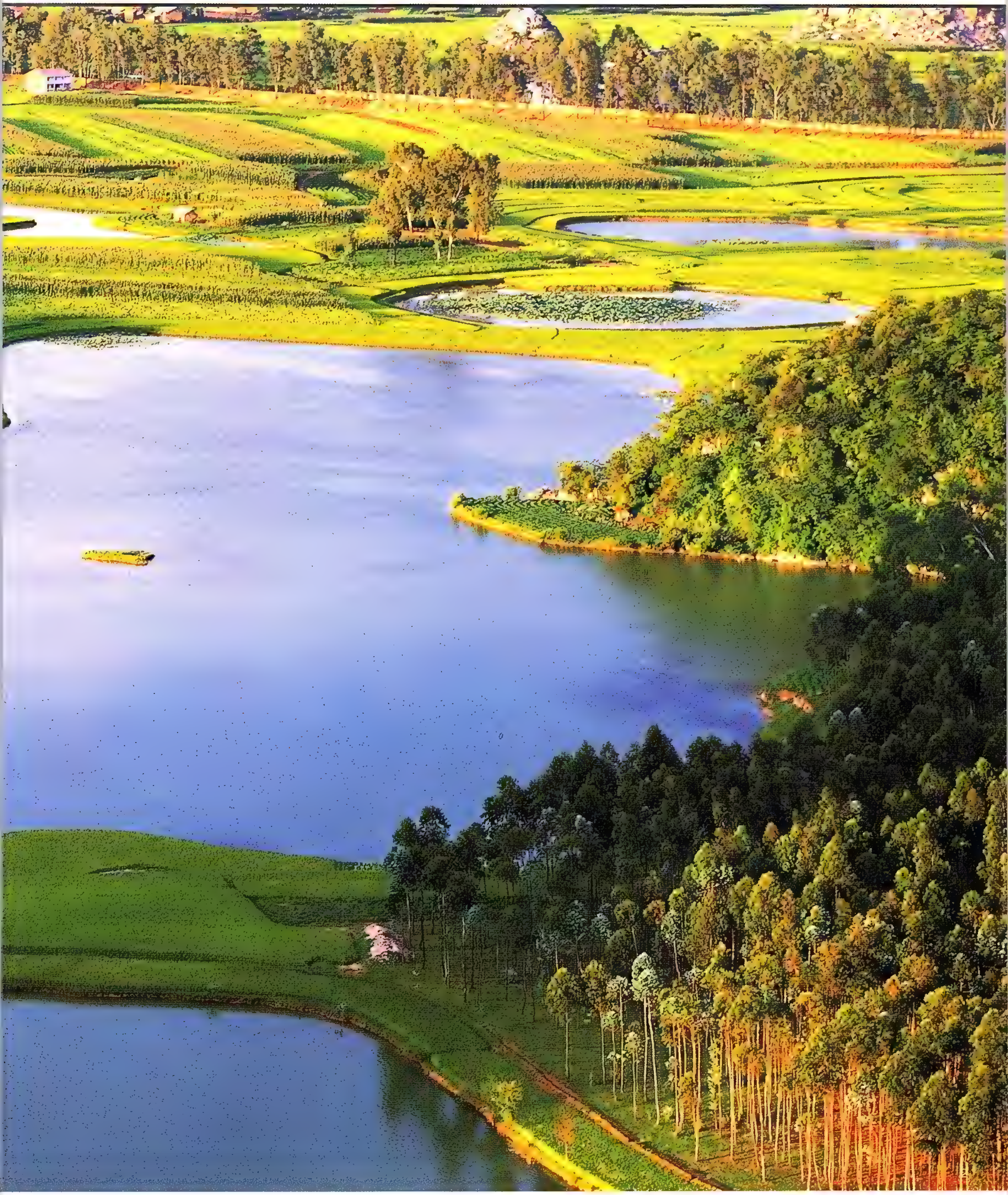

Puzhehei
Idyllic Landscape and Farmland

Travellers in southeast Yunnan's highland are in for a pleasant surprise. In the newly discovered Puzhehei Scenic Area, spectacular karst scenery mingles almost imperceptibly with the idyllic landscape.

Where Fish and Shrimps Abound

The word Puzhehei means "where fish and shrimps abound" in the Yi language. A place bearing this name is invariably a vast water-bound region. Indeed, the Puzhehei Scenic Area boasts 56 lakes with a combined area of 1,300 hectares — 16 of these lakes being connected — which abound in aquatic animals and plants. There are carp, crucian carp, and grass carp as well as such precious fish as silverfish, black carp and bowfin. In 1990 it was reported a 50-kilogram fish was caught here. In summer, people go there to fish or catch freshwater mussels with their bare hands. Aside from fish, the place is also home to quite a few wild birds, including the egret, wild duck, crane and red-beaked gull.

A total of 312 rocky peaks stand by the shore or right in the water. From a bird's-eye view, these peaks look as if they are strung together by mirror-like lakes and ribbon-like rivers. The land is dotted with dwellings under orange-coloured rooftops. The Sani people, a branch of the Yi ethnic group, inhabit the area along with the Miaos, Zhuangs and Bais. The largest patch of

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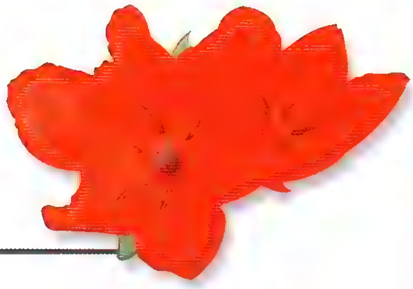


houses in the area is none other than Puzhehei Village.

The villages, mountains and lakes and rivers are imbedded in an immense tapestry of rich verdure. The greenness is set off picturesquely by the orange rooftops, and combines with water surfaces and wooded peaks to form a charming and magnificent picture of poetic proportions.

However, few people have ever managed to climb up one of the mountains for an all-encapsulating view of the landscape. Most visitors feel fulfilled by simply taking a short cruise on one of the lakes in a tiny rowboat.

A Cruise on the Lakes

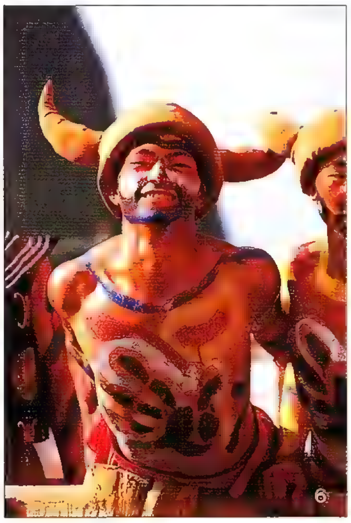
So far the scenic area has opened four lakes to the public — Fairy Lake, Lantern Lake, Pearl Lake and Lotus Flower Lake — which are situated along a 21-kilometre-long cruise route. Plying the waters along this route are small rowboats operated deftly by the local villagers who seldom leave home by means other than a boat and who have the local sights and scenes at their fingertips.

Cruising the lakes of Puzhehei is a most relaxing experience. The water is so clear you can see to the bottom, and the fish there are just waiting to be caught. Lotus flowers drift by and send forth a continuity of delicate fragrance, as the passengers on board gaze fondly at the local Sani people picking lotus seeds and lake seaweed or striking the water surface with punting poles in an attempt to drive fish into their nets. There are areas in the lakes that have been designated for those who want to splash around in the lake or have a water fight.

A Unique Combination of Caves and Lakes

As you cruise on the zigzagging waterway, you are most likely to neglect the fact that the water in these inter-linked lakes is actually mobile. It is a fact that all the lakes at Puzhehei are fed by subterranean rivers. "Running water is never stale", as the saying goes, explains why these lakes are so clear. Puzhehei's lakes coexist nicely alongside peaks, limestone caves, underground rivers and stone forests. This, plus an idyllic landscape and legendary folklore, has turned the place into a rising tourist attraction in Yunnan.

Bull, goat, monkey and dog fights staged by local villagers, as well as dancing parties by a bonfire, are part and parcel of the local folklore.



Previous page:
1. **This correspondent also had his face smeared by the merry-makers. (by Liu Jianming)**
2. **Puzhehei looks like a perfect poetic picture. (by Chan Yat Nin)**

This page:
1. **During the Dirty-Face Festival, people smear each other's faces black. (by Liu Jianming)**
2. **The Yi people hold a grand sacrificial ceremony during the Dirty-Face Festival. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
3. **Puzhehei Village is surrounded on all four sides by lakes, and no villager leaves home by any means other than a boat. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
4. **Bathed in the twilight of dusk, the hills look exceptionally fascinating. (by Liu Jianming)**
5. **This swing attracts young people at the Dirty-Face Festival. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
6. **The makeup and "horns" of this Sani youngster symbolise his love for cattle. (by Chan Yat Nin)**

Puzhehei

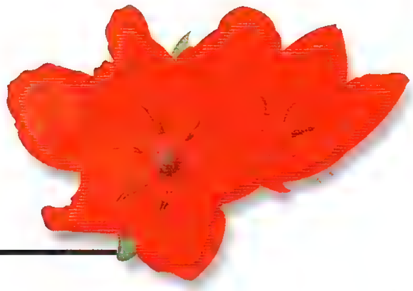
Idyllic Landscape and Farmland

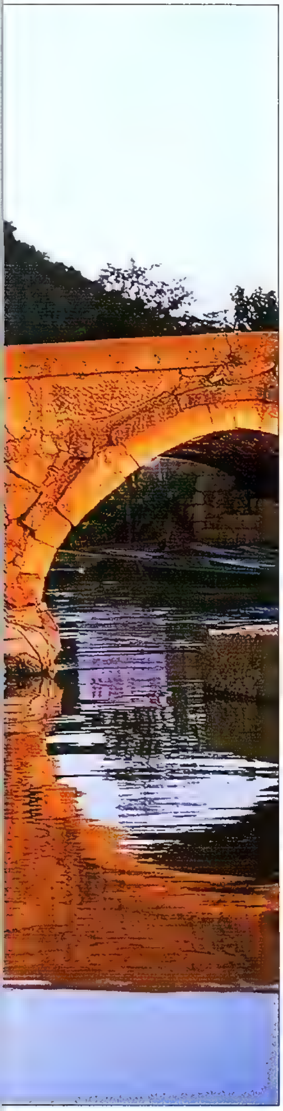
4

Origin of Dirty-Face Festival

The Dirty-Face Festival is an occasion for the Yi people in Qiubei County to offer sacrifice and libations to the mountain gods. The festival evolved from the clan-age ceremony for the worship of fire and mountain gods. In the eyes of the Yi people, a high mountain is the abode of celestial deities, a sky ladder to heaven, or a pillar that props the sky up. Among all the deities the mountain gods are revered the most for their capacity to subdue demons and ghosts. That is why through the ages the Yi people have regarded the mountain gods as their guardians. Shrines for these gods are set up at the south, north, east and west sides of a village.

The Dirty-Face Festival, also known as "Dragon Mountain Festival", begins on the 24th day of the sixth lunar month and lasts for four days. Each day is dedicated to a particular mountain god, with chickens, goats, rice and wine as the offerings. During the festival, a man from each family brings incense sticks, paper money, rice, and tiny kettles of rice wine to the Dragon Mountain, where he joins other men in a picnic. Then they enjoy themselves in various games, such as wrestling, singing, and tree-climbing. The winner is awarded a cup of wine. After the proceedings are over, the man goes





home and shares the remainder of the wine among family members in a gesture to beg the mountain gods for blessings.

Legend has it that during one such festival, a demon in the form of a mountain god arrived at the home of a village head, requesting four beautiful girls. When word about this spread, none of the local young women were willing to depart from their beautiful homeland and loved ones. One of them found the perfect solution — she painted her face black with kitchen stove soot. The other young women followed her lead. Their dirty faces scared the demon so much that it fled off in a great flurry. Since then it has become a tradition for young men and women to smear each other's faces black during the Dragon Mountain Festival so as to keep their villages free from the menace of all demons.

Translated by Ling Yuan

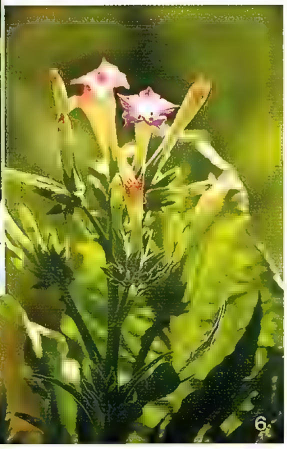
Tips for the Traveller

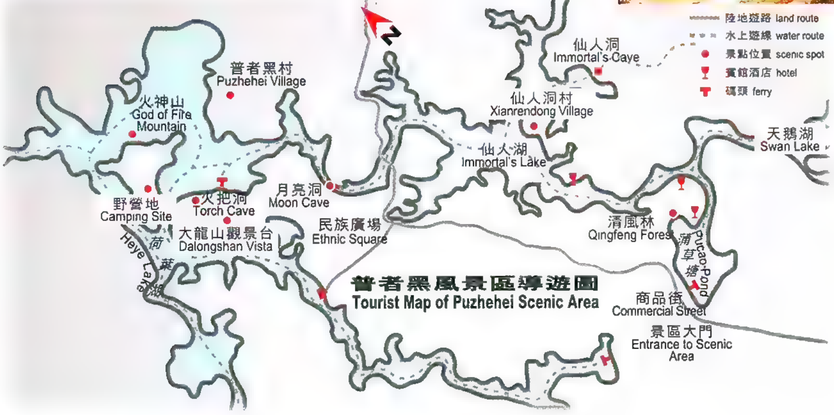
Transport: Puzhehei is 270 kilometres from Kunming. Tourist buses go directly there. Independent travellers may catch the long-distance bus for a six-hour ride to Qiubei and then another bus right to the scenic resort. Nightly buses set off at 8 p.m. from Nanyao Bus Station and Kunming Railway Station; ticket: 64 yuan. A daytime bus sets off at 7:15 a.m. from Nanyao Bus Station and at 8:40 from Jinwan Bus Station; ticket: 42 yuan. Another night bus starts at 7:00 p.m. from Nanyao Bus Station; ticket: 64 yuan.

Lodging: There are 71 hotels and guesthouses in Qiubei and Puzhehei Scenic Area. Qiubei: Ruihe Hotel (three-star): Double room rate: 160 yuan; Xingyun Hotel (two-star): double room rate: 120 yuan. Puzhehei: Yinhu Hotel (three-star): double room rate: 168 yuan; Puzhehei Holiday Resort: double room rate: 128 yuan. During the peak tourist season numerous tents are pitched to accommodate visitors.

Food: Local exotic foods and delicacies are offered at the hotels.

Entrance ticket: 20 yuan. Boat ticket: 20 yuan.




普者黑風景區導遊圖
Tourist Map of Puzhehei Scenic Area
N
陸地遊路 land route
水上遊線 water route
景點位置 scenic spot
賓館酒店 hotel
碼頭 ferry
普者黑村 Puzhehei Village
火神山 God of Fire Mountain
野營地 Camping Site
火把洞 Torch Cave
大龍山觀景台 Dalongshan Vista
荷葉湖 Heye Lake
月亮洞 Moon Cave
民族廣場 Ethnic Square
仙人洞 Immortal's Cave
仙人洞村 Xianrendong Village
仙人湖 Immortal's Lake
天鵝湖 Swan Lake
清風林 Qingfeng Forest
蒲草塘 Pucao Pond
商品街 Commercial Street
景區大門 Entrance to Scenic Area

1. These colourful tents are ideal for honeymooners. (by Chan Yat Nin)
2. The Dirty-Face Festival is also the Torch Festival. The local people light torches and sing and dance at night. (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. Boat-riding peddlers are at your service when you cruise the lakes. (by Chan Yat Nin)
4. Stone bridges sit astride narrow points of the lakes at Puzhehei. (by Liu Jianming)
5. The people of Puzhehei are excellent handicraft artists. These bird cages are for sale. (by Chan Yat Nin)
6. A tobacco plant in blossom (by Chan Yat Nin)

The Rustic Charm of Wild Elephant Valley

Photos by Qiu Kaipei, Chan Yat Nin   Article by Hou Zurong

1

The Wild Elephant Valley in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, is a national nature reserve covered by tropical rain forests teeming with wild elephants and other wildlife. It is the only place in China designated as an Asian Elephant reservation.

Culprits of Traffic Jams

Wild Elephant Valley in Mengyang Nature Reserve is located in the Sancha River Valley 48 kilometres north of Jinghong. Elephants have been spotted in the rain forests in this area for a long time and in recent years their number seems to have increased and their activities more vigorous. They often loiter along the highway and cause traffic jams, refusing to move on despite the constant tooting of automobile horns. In the centre of the valley, large herds of elephants are often seen frolicking in the river like water buffaloes. Some have also been spotted around the barns of domesticated elephants. Within the valley, humans and elephants live side by side in relative bliss, and such a spectacle attracts visitors in droves. Yet once in the Elephant Valley one sees far more than the elephants.

Hotel Rooms in the Trees

To ensure the safety of visitors, the reserve's administration has made a 1,000-metre-long observational corridor of cement and steel that is positioned among the branches of huge trees. In the Forest Inn, hotel rooms, each with two beds and a toilet, are also built right in the trees. To live in one of the rooms in the company of wild elephants and birds is, indeed, a once-in-a-lifetime enjoyment. There are also some large teahouses within the forest, where music is banned so that the wildlife can live in peace. One of these is aptly called the "Quiet Forest Bar".

The hotel in the woods has attracted a constant stream of tourists who come to get lost for a while in nature's embrace. The number of visitors has grown to such an extent that another elevated corridor 2,936 metres long has been added, along with a 2,063-metre-long cable way for observation of the rain forest. From both of these, visitors can marvel at wild elephants bathing in the river and grazing in the woods. Separated sections of elevated corridors have also been built for visitors to use in emergency.

Late one afternoon we arrived at the observation deck of the hotel in the depths of the valley. Ms. Duan, a young waitress who also served as an observer of the wild elephant, gave us a rundown on the behaviour and habits of wild elephants. Asked if she was afraid to get up at midnight to count the visiting elephants, she said, "No." She then added that the elephants were not afraid of human beings either. They had got used to each other since long ago.

The next evening we were lucky to see 14 wild elephants half way up the hill opposite our hotel. They stayed there until noon the next day, and then they moved to the meadowland by the river. That area, we were told, is the confluence of the eastern and western parts of the nature reserve, and has the only "road" for roaming elephants in this part of the world. Elephants like to live in valleys lower than 1,300 metres above sea level and they eat bananas and other tropical fruits. There are now about 300 wild elephant in the Mengyang Nature Reserve, of whom 60 often come here to drink from the many ponds filled with nitrate-rich water. After the nature reserve was established, man-made ponds have been dug, and salt is tossed into the water to attract elephants who come to quench their thirst.

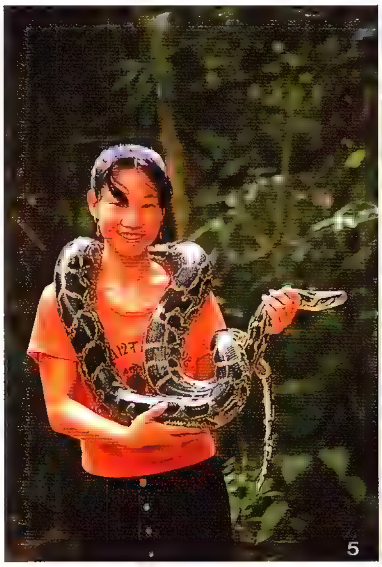
Return of a Tamed Elephant

Visitors who do not have the good fortune to encounter wild elephants can make up their loss by visiting the Elephant Training School, where 16 elephants are being trained and give daily performances. Actually this is China's only elephant taming centre, which has supplied quite a few "graduates" to the rest of the country. According to experts, the taming of elephants for recreational purposes began 300 years ago in Xishuangbanna. The skill later spread to Southeast Asia. Due to war and turmoil, however, this technique was lost in its original place. Only recently has it found its way back from Southeast Asia.

One interesting anecdote is about a tamed elephant called Xianmeng, who got lost from the school for around 10 months. An elephant tamer from Thailand ruled out the possibility of its returning, for, according to him, a domesticated elephant would become wild again six months after it joined a wild group. However, one night when Xianmeng revisited the scenic resort along with a group of wild elephants, it answered the call of its trainer and rejoined the ranks of its domesticated fellows. This incident became the talk of the entire nature reserve, because a case like this was unheard of in either China or Thailand.

Dazzling Kingdom of Butterflies

In the nature reserve we also visited the 6,700-square-metre peacock farm, which is also known as the Hundred-bird Garden, and the 4,800-square-metre Snake Garden. But what impressed me most was the Garden of Butterflies, an affair like half of a terrestrial globe that covers 1,300 square metres of land perfectly. Flowers and grass are grown in the garden. In its laboratory I saw for the first time in my life the artificial breeding of butterflies. The sight of tiny butterflies that had



1. **Wild elephants roam along State Highway 213. (by Qiu Kaipei)**
2. **The Garden of Butterflies breeds all sorts of Xishuangbanna butterflies. These caterpillars are part of the garden's showcase. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
3. **Even toilets are fashioned like trees. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
4. **The golden-phoenix flower of the tropical rain forest (by Chan Yat Nin)**
5. **A service girl in the elephant-watching zone is also a snake tamer. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
6. **A guestroom in the trees (by Qiu Kaipei)**

The Rustic Charm of Wild Elephant Valley

just broken out from flimsy cocoons, and of caterpillars turning themselves into chrysalises inside their cocoons was as amazing as the art of raising silkworms. Kept in the laboratory is a vast collection of sample butterflies in dazzling colours. One of them is called "Singing Star", because its wings are as gorgeous as a singer's fancy dress. The "Withered Leaf" sports wings that look exactly like dry leaves. The "Peacock" exhibits its wings like a peacock opening its tail. The kingdom of butterflies is, indeed, a dazzling spectacle of nature that everyone can enjoy.

Aside from the numerous wild animals and insects, the Wild Elephant Valley also bedazzles its visitors with its jumble of green mountains and layer upon layer of tropical rain forests. In the quiet of the woods, streams run with pleasing murmurs, and wild flowers put on a riotous show of colours all year round. No wonder that visitors, once entrapped in the beauty of the place, always finds it hard to depart.

Translated by Ling Yuan

Tips for the Traveller

Transport: There are long-distance buses for the 650-kilometre trip from Kunming to Wild Elephant Valley, which is situated by State Highway 213; some go overnight and some take two days. There are also 40-minute flights from Kunming to Jinghong, which is only one hour's drive from the valley.

Lodging: There are rooms at various rates at the Wild Elephant Valley's Forest Inn that can accommodate 180 guests. Thatched huts and tree villas are also available.

Sightseeing: There is a 2,063-metre-long cable way for sightseeing tours above the tropical rain forests and the natural habitat of wild elephants. Visitors may take a stroll along two elevated corridors and observe the elephants. Tamed elephants perform four times a day for visitors at China's first elephant taming school, situated in a peripheral zone of the valley. The valley is also the venue of China's first butterfly-breeding centre, the Hundred-bird Garden, and the Snake Garden where some forest boa constrictors are kept.

Access to the elephant-viewing zone is by the cable way. From this zone there is a paved road leading out of the valley. At the exit of the valley is the elephant training school and places to have a meal.

Useful Phone Numbers in Wild Elephant Valley:

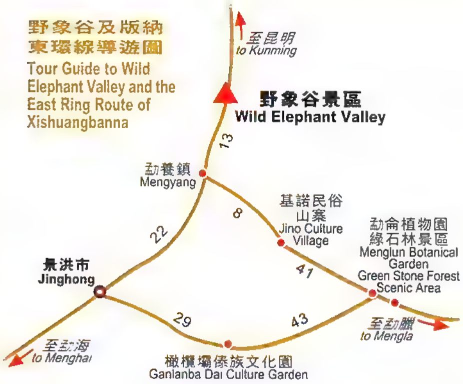
Banna Forest Tour Development Corporation: (691) 213 3657, 212 6310

Banna Wild Elephant Valley Scenic Zone:

Sales Department: (691) 243 0299, 243 1024

Kunming Business Department: (871) 310 2743

1. The sightseeing cable way that runs across the tropical rain forest (by Qiu Kaipei)
2. Large tracks of primitive rain forests remain intact in Xishuangbanna. (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. Among many precious and exotic tropical plants, this one can dance to a song. (by Chan Yat Nin)



野象谷及版納東環綫導遊圖
Tour Guide to Wild Elephant Valley and the East Ring Route of Xishuangbanna

Yunnan Natives Talk About Yunnan

Collated by Zhixiong

This correspondent invited a few tourism experts from Yunnan to talk about their native land. Unexpectedly, the discussion revealed many interesting clues for travel in Yunnan. These useful tips may be helpful for your future Yunnan visits.

Visit Different Places During the Year

Liu Jianhua, photographer specialising in folk culture

A great holiday can be had somewhere in Yunnan anytime of the year. In January Xishuangbanna offers a summer climate, tropical fruits and visits to unique Dai bamboo cottages. In February, Luoping, which is China's largest rape-seed production base, is a sea of beauty with about 13,000 hectares of land covered with rape flowers. In the arid, mild climate of March in southern Yunnan, you can drift down the Nanxi River or make a cross-border tour into Vietnam. In April, Yunnan's festivals give you a unique glimpse of the various minority ethnic groups. These include the Third Month Fair (Sanyue Jie) of the Bai people in Dali, the Water-Splashing Festival of the Dai people in southern and southwestern Yunnan as well as the Zhuang people's Singing Festival. In May and June, the Zhongdian Grassland has boundless blooming flowers. Moreover, the Fifth-Fifth Festival (on the 5th day of the 5th lunar month) is the most solemn festival of the local Tibetans. It is a world of greenery in the Lijiang area, yet you can still take the cable car to see the snowy peaks of the Yulong (Jade Dragon) Snow Mountain. In July and August, you can raft and enjoy the scenery in the Tuoniang Gorge in Funing County or go to Bo'ai Town to see its ancient folk houses and stone-paved lanes. A trip to Puzhehei will be awarded with large tracts of blooming lotus flowers. October is the golden autumn in the highlands of Dêqên. November and December are the best time to visit Ruili and Yingjiang in western Yunnan to see how unmarried young Dai men and women get together to find their loved ones.

Fascinating Towers in Yunnan

Jin Ziqiang, lecturer at Yunnan University

Apart from the unique folkways, beautiful scenery and rare trees and flowers, there are many others things that are worth seeing in Yunnan. For instance, the towers and pagodas in Yunnan are very unique. While the overwhelming majority of towers and pagodas in China as a whole have odd-numbered stories, most of those in Yunnan are even-numbered in stories. There are five such towers or pagodas in Kunming, and the rest are mostly in western Yunnan, including the Three Pagodas in Dali.

Another attraction to visitors are the Yunnan monasteries in which the three sects of Buddhism — Mahayana (Greater Vehicle), Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle) and Esoteric — exist side by side, such as in the Yuntong Monastery of Kunming. In Jianshui County, there is the second largest Confucian temple throughout the country. The county is also famous for its ancient wells and bridges as well as its Qing-dynasty architecture.

Unique Caves and Skies in Yunnan

Tang Jingqing, professor at Kunming Medical College

Caves in Yunnan are very special. For instance, the Yanzi (Swallow) Cave in Jianshui, the Alu Ancient Cave in Luxi and the karst caves in Jiuxiang of Yiliang County all present very unique features.

The extremely blue sky and white clouds in Yunnan are also very interesting. Both the Wangfu (Husband-Watching) Clouds in Dali and Yudai (Jade-Belt) Clouds over the snowy Yulong (Jade Dragon) Mountain in Lijiang are rare scenes not seen in other parts of the country.

Listening to Yunnan *Huadeng*, a sort of folk melody singing, is also a unique experience. In the daytime, you can enjoy the singing in Cuihu Park, and on weekends, at Daguanlou (Grand-View Tower) Park.

An Ideal Place for Amateur Mountaineers

Yi Jiabao, mountaineer

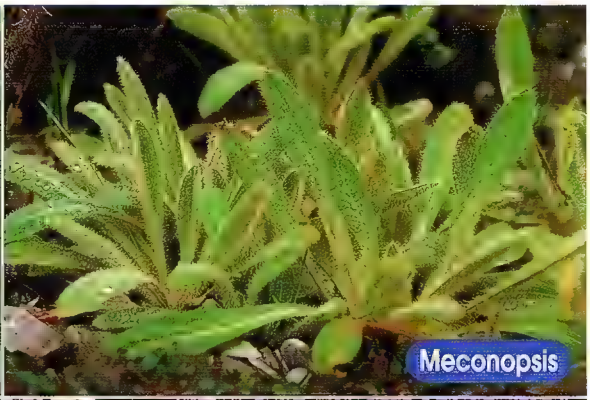
Many of the snow-capped mountains in Yunnan hold a great appeal to mountain climbing enthusiasts. In summer, Malong Peak, the major peak of the Cangshan Mountains in Dali, is an enticing climb. Anyone in good health who loves sport can succeed when the climatic conditions permit, as long as they have the necessary equipment and good local guides. The Haba Snow Mountain was for the first time conquered by four members of the Kunming Mountaineers Association. The Kunming Mountaineering and Tourism Association provides advice and guides to visiting mountain climbers.

Translated by Z. G. Li

Yunnan's Eight Famous Flowers

Article by Zhixiang Photos by Shi Hong

Lily


Meconopsis

Orchid

Primrose

Favoured by natural conditions and geographical location, Yunnan is a province where unusual flowers bloom all year round whether on its eternally snow-capped mountains or humid subtropical river valleys, in the beautiful Xishuangbanna or on the shores of Lake Dianchi where spring lasts for a whole year. In this world of hundreds of flowers, the camellia, azalea, lily magnolia, primrose, lily, gentian, orchid and meconopsis are named as the eight famous flowers of Yunnan. The camellia and azalea are even more famous than the others because of their many varieties and beautifully shaped flowers.

Camellia

The camellia belongs to the tea family and is special to Yunnan. It is a plant under second-class state protection. For its large and beautiful flowers, camellia is highly valued as an ornamental plant for gardens and homes.

The flowering period of the camellia is longer than 100 days. Its blooming flowers are as large as peonies and well liked. What makes it more valuable is that it blossoms at the end of winter, as if it is a harbinger of spring.

Camellias originally grew in the wild. Even today, there are still patches of wild camellias growing in the wilderness of the mountains. Yunnan has a history of more than 500 years of camellia cultivation. Back in the Ming Dynasty, there was already the saying, "Camellias in Yunnan are the best in the world."

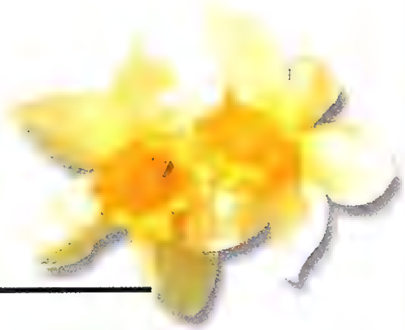
Today, there are more than 100 species of Yunnan camellias. The most highly valued one, however, is the Golden Camellia which puts forth golden flowers. In early spring, when the camellias are in full bloom, their brilliant flowers are everywhere in the mountain wilderness or in the gardens and homes in Kunming, Dali, Baoshan, Tengchong, Lijiang and other places in Yunnan.

Azalea

The azalea, also called *yingshanhong* in China, is one of the principal flowering plants on the tall mountains in Yunnan. It blossoms in April and May. When the mountains and valleys are covered with azalea flowers, they present a magnificent sight.

Magnolia

Azalea



There are many species of azaleas widely scattered in Yunnan. Among the 850 and more species of azaleas in the world, more than 230 can be found in Yunnan.

Through a long period of cultivation, the azalea has been domesticated. There are now as many as 52 potted varieties of azaleas in the Kunming area.

Primrose

The primrose belongs to the primrose family. There are about 500 species in the world with 160 of them in Yunnan. At the time around the Spring Festival every year, when primroses put out their first flowers on the rocky cliffs at Dragon Gate on Yunnan's West Mountain, they cover the whole area with colourful blossoms. Primroses generally grow wild in Yunnan and can be found almost everywhere in the province. There are "field ridge" primroses growing at lower altitude and "high mountain" primroses at high altitude.

Magnolia

Included in the magnolia genus, magnolia family, are *Magnolia denudata*, delavay magnolia, lily magnolia, *Magnolia soulangeana*, and *Magnolia officinalis*. The *Magnolia denudata*, also known as the white magnolia, is a deciduous arborescent plant, whose large flowers are favoured for their elegant and sedate shape. Blossoming between February and March, the snow-white flowers come out before the leaves.

Lily

Lily, also known as lanceleaf lily, is a perennial herbaceous plant with a bulbous root of the lily genus, lily family. There are nearly 100 species in the lily genus in the world, and most of them are distributed in the temperate and subtropical zones of the Northern Hemisphere. Of the more than 30 species that grow in China, nearly 20 of them can be found in Yunnan.

Lilies have a long flowering period and come in many colours. They can be potted or planted in the ground or flower-beds and used as cut flowers. The species usually cultivated in Yunnan are the plateau lanceleaf lily and cranesbill lily.

Orchid

The orchid is a perennial herbaceous plant of the cymbidium genus, orchid family.

Orchids are traditionally cultivated in China as ornamental plants. There are 1,080 species belonging to 148 genera of the orchid family in China. The 70 species of the orchid genus are divided into two groups: air-based and ground-based orchids. Yunnan has more than 30 species of ground-based orchid. The valleys of the Gaoligong Mountain in western Yunnan are full of orchids in different shades of red, yellow, white and green.

Gentian

The gentian is a flowering plant that grows in the wild. It is ranked among the eight famous flowers of Yunnan for its large and bright-coloured flowers and many varieties.

Gentian is the general name for the 400 or so plants of the gentian genus, gentian family, in the world. The gentians growing in the high and cold area of the Hengduan Mountains in Yunnan make up about half of them. Their brilliant flowers are yellow, green, dark red, purplish red or pale green in colour.

Meconopsis

The meconopsis is also a wild flowering plant growing on the edge of rocky shoals and glaciers on high mountains 3,000-4,000 metres above sea level. There are 49 species in the prosperous meconopsis family. With the exception of one species that grows in western Europe, all the others are distributed in China's Himalayas and Yunnan's Hengduan Mountains. The Hengduan Mountains are the centre of the meconopsis family with 39 species. Among them the pale blue Lijiang meconopsis and the bright yellow Gongshan meconopsis are the most famous.

Camellia

Lily Magnolia

Local Products

♦ **Tea Leaves** Yunnan boasts a great variety of tea leaves. Yunnan broken tea leaves, the best of all of its kind, produce black tea characterised by its enchanting colour and strong aroma. The mild Pu'er tea can not only soothes one's thirst but also possesses curative effects. Tuocha tea leaves are a kind of superior compressed tea produced by the Xiaguan Tea Factory in Dali. Tuocha tea has pleasing colour, aroma and flavour. Varied first-class green tea leaves like Dianlü and Yunzhen are also produced in the province.

♦ **Yunnan Baiyao** A traditional medication, Yunnan Baiyao (White Medicine) is composed of several precious medicinal herbs and is produced by an advanced pharmaceutical method. It can be applied both externally and internally to stop bleeding, remove blood clots, cure inflammation and discharge poisonous substances from the body.

♦ **Xuanwei Ham** Also known as Yunnan Ham, it is a local product of Xuanwei County that appeared 200 years ago. Xuanwei Ham is tender, not too fatty nor too lean. The food is good for health and enables quick recovery after surgery. It is best served steamed in thin slices.

♦ **Pseudo-ginseng** A valuable Chinese medicinal herb grown in Yunnan, sanqi, or pseudo-ginseng, can be taken either raw or cooked; both revive one's health. The herb is also beneficial to patients suffering from coronary disease and can lower one's cholesterol and blood fat level.

♦ **Dai Brocade** Superb craftsmanship is required to manage such complicated weaving. Dai brocade is typical for its distinctive patterns, gorgeous colour and durability. The brocade can be processed into clothes, bedding, curtains, handkerchiefs, as well as new products like screens and cushions.

♦ **Marble** Yunnan abounds with marble, an important material for handicrafts and construction. The 19 peaks of Cangshan Mountain are a treasure-house of a variety of marble remarkable for its marvellous patterns and superb texture. Shuimo (Ink) Marble with black veins on the white rock is an excellent masterpiece of nature. White Marble, also known as Han White Jade, glows with a glistening whiteness.

♦ **Tengchong Jade Ware** The jade ware of Tengchong are renowned for their multiplicity, remarkable shape and supreme craftsmanship. Jade sculptures featuring animals, birds, and even humans are created according to the shape and colour of the precious stone. Jade bangles, brooches, cigarette holders and seals are welcomed by minority groups. Others like jade ornaments and statuettes of Buddha are exported overseas.

♦ **Chess Pieces** The chess pieces are one of the three treasures of Yunnan. Originally produced in Baoshan, and now in Kunming, these chess pieces are noticeable for their strong texture, soft colour and primitive and simple outlook.

♦ **Tobacco** Yunnan's baked tobacco leaves, ideal for producing the finest cigarettes, have a delightful odour and a pure taste. The tobacco leaves produced in Yuxi and Jiangchuan counties rank first in Yunnan and are used in famous Yunnan cigarettes such as Hongtashan, Ashima and Yunyan.

Local Delicacies

♦ **Qiguo Chicken** Steamed Chicken is a renowned local delicacy of Yunnan. The unique cooking method of this dish retains the tenderness of the meat and the sweet flavour of the broth. The chicken together with other ingredients are cooked in a special ceramic steamer with high heat for three to four hours. The chicken meat remains delicate and juicy and the soup is particularly sweet. The nutrition of the meat is preserved as well. Precious Chinese medicinal herbs that grow in Yunnan such as sanqi and *Gastrodia elata* are also added to increase the nutritional and medicinal value of the dish.

♦ **Guoqiao Rice Noodles** A representative snack of the province, Guoqiao (Bridge-crossing) Rice Noodles are welcomed by both locals and tourists visiting Yunnan.

Fine noodles are cooked together with dainty ingredients and are served distinctively. First of all, the customers are served with a bowl of boiling hot broth made from chicken and pork bones. The broth is covered with a layer of oil which prevents it from cooling down. Then the customers have to "boil" the meat — cooked chicken, pork and fish — in the broth. After that, various kinds of vegetables are added followed by the rice noodles together with seasoning. The dish not only tastes and smells great but also looks excellent!

♦ **Dai Dishes** The Dai people boasts a wide range of distinctive local delicacies. Dishes like steamed pork and steamed pig brain wrapped in banana leaves, roast bamboo rat with lemongrass, roast fish, roast eel, roast bamboo shoots and many vegetarian dishes like fried moss and pumpkin sprouts are all typical Xishuangbanna Dai food.

Roast Bamboo Rat: The rat is roasted until it is half-done. Then the meat is minced and made into meat cakes with spring onions and ginger added. The meat cakes are then wrapped in lemongrass and roasted over fire. The dish is one of the most refined delicacies of the Dai.

Roast Fish (Chicken): Sprinkled with spring onions, ginger and chili, a thoroughly cleaned fish is wrapped with lemongrass and roasted. The aroma and the taste of the fish are irresistible.

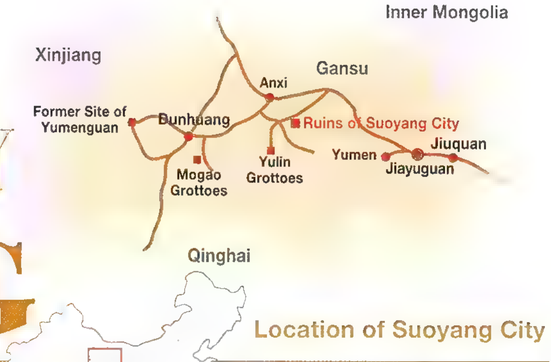
Fish with Sour Bamboo Shoots: Tender bamboo shoots are sliced and then pickled with salt and chili. When cooked, the bamboo shoots are stir fried first and later water is added for making the broth. Fish (or chicken) slices are finally added. The sour taste of this dish can really whet one's appetite.

♦ **Fish Casserole in Dali style** The dish is a traditional Bai cuisine. A carp caught from Erhai Lake is cooked in broth with a variety of ingredients including bamboo shoots, bean curds, chicken, ham, sea cucumbers, squids and many others. Because of its special taste, the dish is offered to distinguished guests in the Bai village.

♦ **Milk Fan** It is a traditional dairy product of the Bai living in Dali. Fresh cow's milk is heated and mingled with sour milk generated from fermentation, causing it to curdle in fan shape, hence the name. Milk fan can be taken raw or cooked. Cooked milk fan can be served stir fried, braised, shallow fried and deep fried. These four different cooking methods bring forth a multiplicity of extraordinary milk fan dishes.

A LOOK AT HISTORY IN SUOYANG

Photos & article by Chen Huai



Location of Suoyang City

Ruins of the eastern wall of Suoyang City and the distant Qilian Mountains

Inside the city walls, ruins of many earthen houses are buried under shifting sand. Chinese tamarisk and brambles, survivors of harsh desert conditions, grow amidst the dunes.

A zigzagging road paved with stone slabs led up to the top of the city wall from where the entire Suoyang City and its surroundings all came into clear view. Though dilapidated, this ancient city still retains its magnificence.

Wall Ruins Like History Book Pages

Some 86 kilometres from the seat of Anxi County in Gansu Province in Northwest China stand the ruins of the ancient Suoyang City. Famous in the Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, it stretches east-west in an oblong shape. The city is 565 metres long from east to west and 468 metres wide from north to south. According to historical records, the eastern half served as the living quarters of army officers and their families, while the western half was the soldiers' camp. The city walls are 10 metres high. At the northwestern corner is an 18-metre-high turret, with a domed doorway which may have been a rain shelter.

Within the walls are ruins of earthen houses, mostly covered with shifting sand, and Chinese tamarisk and brambles grow all over. Ashes of burned coal are piled up like small hills. Broken chinaware is everywhere. Streets are vaguely discernible. Dried wells and ancient trees seem to tell visitors of the dramatic changes history has brought to this ancient city.

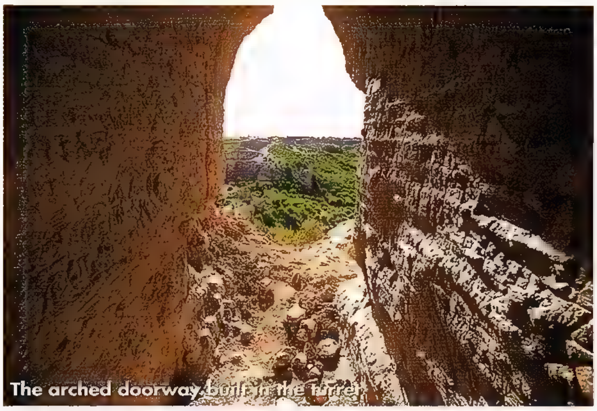
Few people know of the historical sites in Anxi County, and due to poor transportation, not many visit the ancient Suoyang City. On the day our group was there, barely a handful of others were in

The Ta'er Monastery

The tower forest bathed in the morning rays sight. Trudging among the city's sand dunes, the exceptional quietness made me hallucinate, as if I had gone back into a prehistorical period.

Under the setting sun, the city walls, built with layers of earth, were clearly visible, resembling the pages of a voluminous history book. The outer west wall was mostly buried under shifting sand. In some places, one could climb the ridges of the sand dunes to get up to the top of the city wall. Chinese tamarisk bushes grew amidst the dunes, but to the south was an endless tract of desert. In the distance the barren ridges and peaks of the Qilian Mountains stretched to the horizon.

A legendary loving story is very popular among the local people. It says that during the early years of the Tang Dynasty, Xue Dingshan, son of the famous general Xue Rengui, guarded the place on behalf of his ageing father. Three times he was defeated by Fan Lihua, the female head of some local bandits, and was forced to marry her; three times he managed to divorce her. Later, when Xue and his army were surrounded by the troups of Hami Kingdom, Xue had to ask Fan for help. The two were finally on good terms and defended Suoyang City together ever since.


The arched doorway built in the turret

The east wall is particularly dilapidated. From the northeastern wall we saw a forest of earthen pagodas about one kilometre away — the famous Ta'er Monastery of Suoyang.

Ta'er Monastery Plundered

The Ta'er Monastery is basically a large site of ruins. We could identify all four monastery walls, as well as the platform which had

Ta'er Monastery is basically a large site of ruins. Yet, its earthen walls and the earthen platform base of the monastery's side buildings and monks' dorms, are still discernible.

Bases of the collapsed walls scattered among sand dunes

served as the base for the monastery's side buildings and monks' dorms. In the centre of the compound is another platform for the main hall and to its north is a 14.5-metre-tall ancient pagoda built with sun-dried earthen bricks and whitened with lime. The pagoda appears lofty and solid but plain. Its top is structured like a double bowl. According to the local elders, in the 1940s the Russians looted the pagoda, taking a large number of Buddhist sutra books and art works. Further north are the bases of a row of collapsed smaller pagodas.

The Chronicles of Anxi County says: The epigraph on one side of an excavated stele of the Tang Dynasty here sang praises of Zhao Yichao (a local chieftain who had pledged allegiance to the Tang imperial court) for his meritorious services to the locality in building water conservancy projects and opening up wasteland; the other side recorded praise of Cao Yijin, a famous person of the Five Dynasties (907-979).

This area around the city and the monastery is flat and wide open. Before dawn, we stood in a field by the Ta'er Monastery, waiting for the sunrise. The earthen hillocks were scoured by strong winds into a unique aeolian (yardan) landform of ridged crests and shallow grooves of rock. The cold morning wind blew hard as the red sun provided a red background for the ancient pagoda.

The Moving Yumenguan Pass

The ruins of Suoyang City are a strong reminder of the vicissitudes of the Yumenguan Pass. The pass we saw today, near the Jiayuguan Pass, was built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). In the Han Dynasty, Yumenguan Pass, which symbolised the western gate of the country, was built in the gobi desert about 100 kilometres northwest of Dunhuang. The ambitious Han-dynasty people had managed to build the far western section of the Great Wall into the arid desert, despite their lack of knowledge concerning the strengthening technique of interlocking earthen bricks. In the Tang Dynasty, Yumenguan Pass was moved eastwards by 250 kilometres, to a place near Suoyang City.

At dusk, the sun's golden beams shot through the northwestern turret's arched doorway, gilding the entire sky. Suoyang City gradually merged into the night darkness, taking along with it its rich history.

Translated by Li Zhenguo

History of Suoyang City

The ruins of Suoyang City and Ta'er Monastery are in the gobi desert south of Qiaozi Township (86 kilometres from the county seat) in Anxi County, Gansu Province.

According to archaeological research, Suoyang City was the seat of Min'an County in the Han Dynasty, and seat of Guazhou in the Tang Dynasty. The Ta'er Monastery was where the local officials and folks held sacrificial and religious activities from the Tang Dynasty to the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

In the period of the Six Dynasties (the early third to late sixth centuries) to the Sui and Tang dynasties, the Silk Road linking the Chinese Central Plains with the West Region ran through present-day Anxi to Hami in Xinjiang. Yumenguan Pass was moved in the Tang Dynasty into Guazhou from its former site over 100 kilometres west of Anxi. Unfortunately the Tang-dynasty Yumenguan Pass is now submerged in the Shuangta Reservoir.

Suoyang is also linked to the famous Monk Xuan Zhuang who reached Suoyang on his way to India to learn Buddhist sutras. As imperial court orders barred anyone going through Yumenguan Pass, he secured a Tartar guide to cross the Hulu River five kilometres north of the pass one night. In the Yulin Grottoes as well as the East Thousand-Buddha Grottoes in Anxi County, there are six murals based on this story.

The original name of the city, legend says, was Kuyu. When Xue Rengui, a famous Tang-dynasty general, led his army west, he was besieged by enemy troops. As supplies were exhausted, the soldiers dug up the roots of the local plant *Cynomorium songaricum* (called *suoyang* in Chinese) to feed themselves until reinforcements came. Hence, from this time the city became Suoyang.

The area around Suoyang was frequently haunted by war. In the Ming Dynasty, the city walls were rebuilt, but later destroyed by the troops of a Turpan regime. Since then, it has been abandoned.

The author, in a self-made photo

The Opening of

THE GUANGZHOU HUANG DAXIAN TEMPLE

Revitalisation of an Ancient Site in Fangcun Village

The Wong Tai Sin Temple in Hong Kong is always thronged with local pilgrims as well as those from other parts of China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. Devoted visitors often spare the time to visit the temple to worship the gods and pray for blessings.

Now, in Fangcun Village in Guangzhou, a brand new Huang Daxian (Wong Tai Sin) Temple has been open since the Spring Festival. The old temple at the same site was built in 1899 and destroyed in 1910 during the Qing Dynasty. The section of the temple now open to public, the first phase of the construction project, includes the Hall of Huang Daxian, Hall of Master Lü, and Hall of the Goddess of Mercy. The rest, such as a vegetarian restaurant and a library, will be finished in the next few months. Behind the new temple's front gate are the remains of the former one, including its stone pillars, stone lions and inscribed boards.

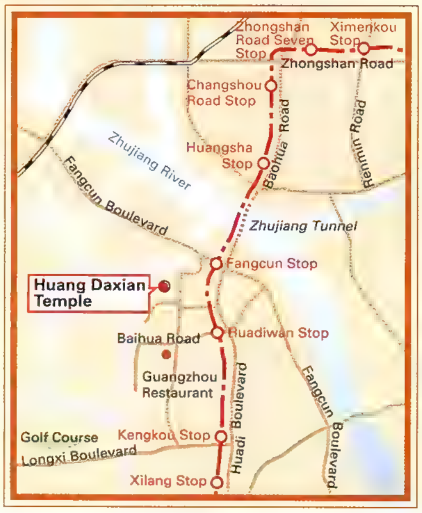
1. The opening of the new temple is a great occasion for the believers.
2. The old temple in Fangcun Village was built 20 years earlier than the one in Hong Kong.
3. Hurrying into the temple
4. Thousands of pilgrims come to worship the gods in the opening ceremony.
5. The 3.2-metre-high bronze statue of Huang Daxian weighs 3,000 kilograms.
6. On the opening day

Tips for the Traveller

Transportation: A direct train runs from Hong Kong to Guangzhou, from where one can take bus No. 69, 75, 193 or 283 outside the station, or the subway, to the Fangcun stop and then a taxi.

Admission: 2 yuan per person

Opening hours: 7 a.m.-5 p.m. daily


Zhongshan Road Seven Stop
Ximenkou Stop
Zhongshan Road
Changshou Road Stop
Huangsha Stop
Baohua Road
Renmin Road
Zhujiang River
Fangcun Boulevard
Zhujiang Tunnel
Fangcun Stop
Huang Daxian Temple
Baihua Road
Huadiwan Stop
Guangzhou Restaurant
Huadi Boulevard
Fangcun Boulevard
Golf Course
Kengkou Stop
Longxi Boulevard
Xilang Stop

Talking About Dudu, the Panda Star of Longevity

Photos by Hua Kai Article by Yu Gong

The average life expectancy of a giant panda is 25 years, and those over 26 years are regarded as unusual. The 28-year-old female panda Qiangqiang of Shenyang is famed for her tenacious cling to life, but the real longevity star is 36-year-old Dudu of Wuhan.

Dudu was sunbathing the day I saw her. She slobbered when yawning lazily. As befitting her old age, quite a few of Dudu's teeth were missing. As a woman animal keeper rattled a ring of keys to signal mealtime, Dudu followed the sound and slumbered towards her plate. Cataracts have robbed Dudu of her eyesight, thus the keys were what attracted Dudu to her meals now. A typical meal consists of rice soup, egg, milk powder, sugar and some additives. Dudu is no longer capable of chewing a bamboo stalk, no matter how tender it is.

To find out more about Dudu's longevity we talked with Du Youshun, an expert at the Wuhan Zoo, and Yao Bao'an, a professor of the Central China Agricultural College.

Question: As Dudu was born in the wild, I surmise it is hard to determine her birthday. What makes you to regard her as the star of longevity?

Answer: It is true there's no way to know Dudu's exact date of birth, but we are sure about the year. In September 1960, a couple of infant giant pandas were captured in the Foping Nature Reserve of Sichuan. One was a male and the other a female. Three years later records show they were shipped into the Chengdu Zoo, the male one named Chengcheng and the female one, Dudu.

Q: It is said that Dudu had never conceived. Does this have something to do with her longevity?

A: Dudu had never conceived, but this has nothing to do with health. Unlike in the wilderness, where animals are free to choose their mates, in a zoo animal matings are arranged. This is not conducive to these animals' natural breeding. Before age 26, Dudu was in heat repeatedly, but nothing ever came out of it. However, quite a few giant pandas with long lives have sired offspring.

Q: Can Dudu's longevity be attributed to the fact that she is well looked after? Are you using some secret food recipes on Dudu?

A: Careful nursing is rather important, no question about it. In the wild giant pandas mainly feed on leaves of arrow bamboo (*Sinarundinaria nitida*), wild vegetables, and tender bamboo shoots. After a giant panda has turned 20, its teeth would be so worn out that it is no longer able to chew. That is why giant pandas living in the wild tend to die of intestinal obstruction or hunger. Over the last dozen years Dudu has fed a special formula. We are fastidious about what staple and non-staple food Dudu is fed, so much so that we take care about what brand of milk powder is used. I cannot tell you the recipe as it is a matter of intellectual property rights.

Q: What else are you doing to keep Dudu alive for so long?

A: Feeding and health protection are what contribute to Dudu's long life. But she cannot possibly avoid aging, ailments, and eventually, death. Dudu has had all the old-age ailments that occur in giant pandas, such as cataract, intestinal obstruction and senile epilepsy. Our special medical group cures Dudu by combining Western and traditional Chinese medicines. A few years ago, Dudu had suffered a near-fatal case of intestinal obstruction, and we brought her around with a conservative therapy. Last summer her hearing deteriorated drastically. The medical group gave her a placenta concoction, and her hearing showed miraculous improvement.

Q: Have you set any goals for Dudu's life expectancy?

A: Yes. But this is something to strive for. We believe we can bring Dudu into the 21st century.

Translated by Ling Yuan

1. Though she is no longer able to chew, the ageing panda never forgets her favourite food.
2. Dudu, the longevity star, now lives on the soup specially prepared for her.

The Legend of Sigangli in the Ava Mountain

Photos by Hu Yahua, Liu Jianming Article by Liu Dongping

Leaving Simao city, we proceeded westward and crossed Yunnan's torrential Lancang River that rolled on between rocky cliffs. After passing Jieshi, home of the Lahu people, we came to the Ava Mountain. Its precipitous cliffs and momentous chains of peaks have moulded the bold temperament of the Va people.

The county seat of the Ximeng Va Autonomous County was built on the top of the Fodian (Buddha's Hall) Mountain, the tallest mountain in the county. Though not very large, set off by the contour of the mountain, it presented a magnificent picture. When the light of the afternoon sun shone on the buildings of uneven heights against a background of green mountains, the town looked like a very lively place.

A granite sculpture stands in the middle section of the main street. Known as "The Offspring of Sigangli", the triangular sculpture is carved in dark red granite with a group of statues of Va men, women and children on top and an ox head worshipped by the Va in the middle.

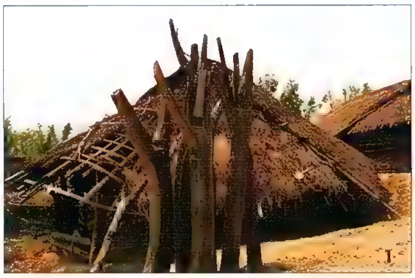
In the Va language, "sigangli" means "people coming out from a rocky cave". This story about the origin of the Va people comes from the popular legend of "Sigangli".

Long ago, the Vas' ancestors lived in a cave on a big mountain. One day, the heavenly god sent several sparrows to peck a hole into the cave. When a Va man tried to crawl out of the cave through the hole, a tiger chewed him to death. A Va woman then tried to crawl out but the tiger gripped her by the throat. As the woman was dying, a clever rabbit sunk its teeth into the tiger's tail. Overcome with pain and anger, the tiger let go and ran away. At this moment, the Va people rushed out of the cave like a tidal wave. They left the cave for good and began life in the normal world. The kind-hearted sparrows brought them grain to eat, animal skins to wear and seeds to sow. Over the years the Va people established villages near the cave.

This rocky cave which spilled forth the Va people is said to be on a mountain near Bagedai about 30 kilometres northwest of the county town of Ximeng. During an archaeological survey made in the 1980s, a number of well-polished stone axes and knives were discovered in the northwestern part of Ximeng. Studies show that the stone tools belong to the Neolithic Age, proving that the Ava Mountain was already inhabited by humans then.

Today, the Va people in Ximeng and Cangyuan, as well as in neighbouring Myanmar, all look upon Sigangli as a sacred place and their place of origin, similar to Mecca for the Muslims. The Vas from both China and Myanmar go in groups every year to the mountain near Bagedai to hold ancestral memorial ceremonies.

Ox-Spearing Poles in a Va Village



We set out in two jeeps. Climbing a mountain at one moment and fording across a river the next, we drove along a bumpy and dusty road for more than two hours before reaching the village at Bagedai. At its entrance were two tall, ancient trees rarely seen anywhere else. One of them had a hollow trunk and looked like a sculpture. Even the best sculptors would admire the beauty of its shape created by nature. The other tree had long vines hanging down from the tree top and looked like an old man who had watched the world change. These two trees alone told that the village was a very old one.

As we strolled into the village, some blackened poles in front of a thatched hut caught my eye. Each pole was shaped like the letter Y and more than a metre high; together they resembled a grove of burnt trees. These were the ox-spearing poles that I had heard about. It was a primitive custom practised in savage times, but I never expected to see them here.

The Va people are a courageous and valiant people who had preserved some barbarous customs practised by primitive tribes. Their traditional way of killing an ox for its meat was not with a knife or axe, but with a spear. The ox was tied on the ox-spearing poles and the butcher would drive a sharp spear through its left upper belly, directly into its heart. The ox would drop to the ground, dead instantly. A good spear-wielder usually killed the ox in one try. Spearing an ox was often associated with the Vas' sacrificial ceremonies. An ox represented considerable wealth to the primitive Va tribes. Spearing an ox and offering it to the god showed that they sincerely believed in and were fearful of the god.

There was an even more barbarous practice, which was called "cutting the oxtail". It was part of the ceremony of offering a human head to the god of cereals, in which an old human skull was taken from the house of the wooden drum to the "Ghost Forest", where recreational activities for entertaining the "skull ghost" were held. The ceremony began with the Moba (sorcerer) and the master of ceremony choosing a "kind-hearted" ox (a healthy and meek ox with pure coloured fur). While chanting prayers, the Moba kept on pouring wine on the ox and then led it in two circles around the house. At the end of the two circles, he would draw his long knife and suddenly hack off its tail. At this moment, a group of burly men armed with steel knives would rush up and, while shouting and howling, cut pieces of flesh from the ox. Within minutes, a live ox was reduced to mere skeleton. Even then the ox was often still alive.

The barbarous sacrificial ceremony was associated with the Va people's long tradition of primitive hunting. It is said that Anmur, a famous Va leader, who wanted to train his people to be courageous, often tied a newly caught animal onto a stone pole and let people compete in cutting it up. The one who cut the largest amount of flesh was considered a hero. Over time this became the Va custom of "cutting the oxtail".

Today, there is no such ceremony, nor any cutting of oxtails, but the ox-spearing poles are still there to remind people of the past and the present, barbarity and civilisation.

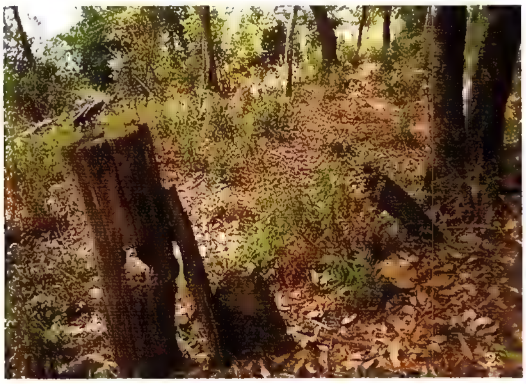
Previous page:
The Va people are talented dancers. The Hair-flinging Dance is a good representative of their dances. (by Zhong Jintang)
1. **Ox-spearing poles in Bagedai Village (by Liu Dongping)**
2. **Ox head is a symbol of the gallantry of Va men. (by Hu Yahua)**

'Ghost Forest' and Head Pole

We went to look for the head poles in the dense forest in front of the village. The virgin forest was a desolate place strewn with withered vines and grass. In some places, we had to part the grass to make a path. In one place, our way forward was blocked by two fallen trees with huge trunks that must have been several hundred years old. As we were making a detour around the fallen trees, Yan Pao, director of the county's forestry bureau, who had been our guide, cried out aloud, "There is a head pole here!" I turned round and saw that the head pole was about half the height of a man and half a metre wide, showing clear wood grain. It had a cavity in the middle for placing a human head.

The "head sacrifice" was the highest form of sacrificial ceremonies among primitive tribes. Legend says a Va tribal leader named Kelietuo, who was married but childless, adopted an orphan as his son. Shortly, his wife fell seriously ill and could not recover despite prolonged treatment. He consulted the Great Moba, who said, "Go and hollow out a piece of wood into a drum and offer a human head as sacrifice to it. Your wife will recover." Kelietuo hacked several pieces of wood into drums, but none of them boomed like a drum. The Moba then told him to make a wooden drum in the shape of his wife's sex organ and offer the head of his adopted son as a sacrifice to it. Kelietuo did this, and the drum boomed and his wife's illness was cured.

In fact, head hunting originated from tribal wars. Later, it was believed that cutting off too many heads was a bad omen and that there should be a more rational way.



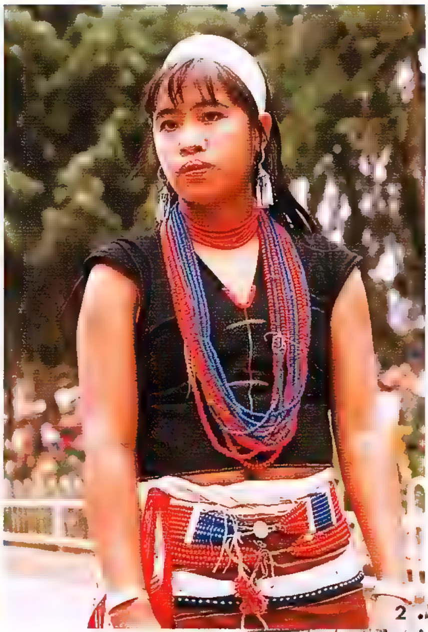
In fact, head hunting originated from tribal wars. After every battle, the prisoners' heads were cut off and displayed as victory trophies. Later, it was believed that cutting off too many heads was a bad omen and that there should be a more rational way. As a result, it gradually became a sacrificial ceremony, in which a human head was offered to a wooden drum as a sacrifice to pray for safety and peace, and a rich harvest of cereals. This barbarous custom, of course, is no longer in existence today.

After walking a short distance from the "Ghost Forest", we started our drive back to the highway. In the distance were some low green hills. Pointing his finger at a forest, Yan Pao said, "The real Sigangli is over there." In that direction, I could see a protruding cliff with a shadowy cave beneath it.

As there was no road leading to it, the jeeps could go no farther. "China and Myanmar are drawing up a plan to develop Sigangli into a tourist area," Yan Pao said. "When you come here next time, you may be able to go into the cave and experience what it was like when the Va people crawled out of the cave."

1. **The huge banyan trees standing at the entrance to the village (by Liu Dongping)**
2. **A trunk found in the "Ghost Forest" which has been hollowed out for holding a human head (by Hu Yahua)**

Nightlife in the County Town



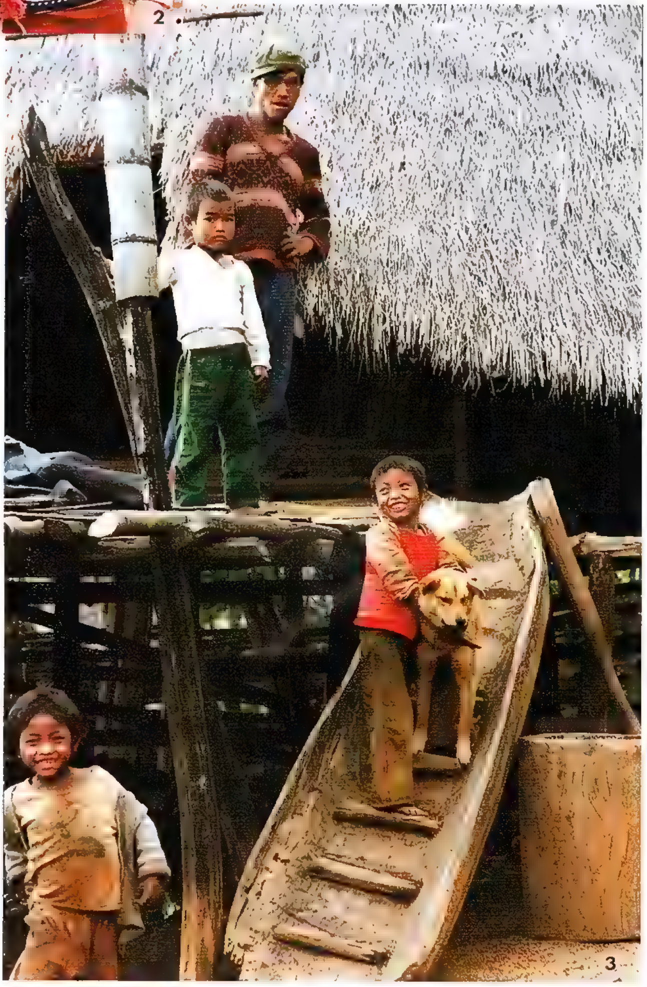
The small Ximeng town is by no means an out-of-the-way place. There are frequent visitors from Beijing, Shanghai and Kunming as well as foreign countries.

Compared with Bagedai and the Va villages in the mountains, the seat of the Ximeng Va Autonomous County is a prosperous and noisy place with a breath of modern life.

Our host in the county invited us to a Va dinner in a restaurant called Cloud Pavilion. In the street, I looked around and found there were quite a number of large and small restaurants. With people coming and going, they seemed to be doing quite well. The small Ximeng town is by no means an out-of-the-way place. There are frequent visitors from Beijing, Shanghai and Kunming as well as foreign countries. As all types of trading companies have sprung into existence like mushrooms after the rain, the restaurants are good places for business negotiations and information exchange.

After nightfall, we took a stroll in the street. The Cultural Palace was bright with lights. The Ximeng Song and Dance Ensemble was giving a performance of Va songs and dances which are famous both in China and abroad. Since some in our group had seen the performance before, our host took us to a Karaoke dance hall. It was not a very big place and there were not many people. I tried to sing two folk songs and found that the acoustics were exceptionally good, even better than that in some Karaoke places in Kunming and Beijing. Presently, a group of young men walked in. The songs they requested were all those popular among young people in big cities, and the way they sang them was quite up to the mark. On the map, Ximeng seems to be a remote place near the border, yet the young people there were catching up with the big cities in the rhythm of modern life.

1. Va youths (by Liu Jianming)
2. The adornments of Va women (by Che Keqin)
3. A happy family (by Hu Yahua)



The Va People

Distribution of Population: The Va people live in an area that straddles the border between China and Myanmar, an area west of the southern section of the Lancang River in China's Yunnan Province and east of the Salween River in Myanmar. With a total population of over 700,000, over half of them live on the Chinese side, mainly in the two Va autonomous counties of Cangyuan and Ximeng. The largest concentration is to be found in the Ava Mountain, which derived its name from the Va people living there. The Va people in these two counties make up over 50 percent of the whole Chinese Va population. The others are scattered in neighbouring Menglian, Lancang and other counties.

Natural Environment: The Ava Mountain area is subtropical in climate with plentiful rainfall and fertile soil. The red and yellow soils in the area are suitable for growing upland rice and corn, and the clay in the flat land, for growing paddy rice, tea, silk cotton, tobacco and other economic crops. Trees grow in luxuriance and are green all year round in the mountains. In the virgin and regenerated forests are elephants, tigers, bears, deer and some rare wild life.

History of the Name: Va or Ava means "people living on the mountain". The name shows that the Va people have been living on the mountain since long ago. But other groups, such as the Dai, Han and Lahu, used to call the Va people by different names, such as La, Ben or Kawa, which have derogatory meanings. After 1949, based on the wish of the majority of the ethnic group, the name was formally changed to Va.

Religious Beliefs: The Va people are believers of a primitive religion, Buddhism and Christianity. Most believe in their primitive religion, a cult of nature which believes that all things have a soul. There is a soul for every human being, mountain, river, animal, plant, thunder, lightning, wind, rain and other natural phenomena, which is called a spirit or god and should be worshipped.

Wedding and Funeral Customs: The Va people practise monogamy, but there are exceptional cases of polygamy. Marriage is basically free, but men and women bearing the same surname do not marry. Marriage between cousins is very popular. When the husband dies, his widow may be given to one of his brothers as his wife. In some villages, she may be given to one of his uncles. Divorce is permissible and widows may remarry. When a Va adult dies a normal death, his family will fire a shot in the direction of the sunset or beat a drum or gong to announce the death. The dead are buried in a coffin made from a hollowed out, rough log of wood split in two. The corpse is wrapped in linen and placed in the hollow. The coffin is then tied with bamboo bark splits or rattan and put into the ground. Before the burial, a sorcerer is invited to kill a chicken, chant incantations and perform a funeral ceremony so the soul of the dead can rest in peace.

Lifestyle: Most of the Va villages are built on slopes, following the contour of a mountain. The houses of uneven heights are built mostly of bamboo and wood. A house usually has three rooms and a fire-pit. Rice is the Vas' staple food. The Va men cut their hair short and wear a turban, a short jacket, a pair of loose but short pants and a neck ring of bamboo or rattan. The women wear a collar-less short jacket and a short skirt and tie puttees around their lower legs. They wear silver bands on their heads, silver earrings, silver neck rings, and silver bangles on both the upper arms and forearms.

(Compiled by Dong Ping)

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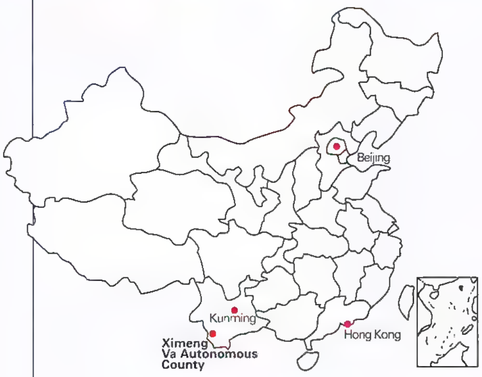


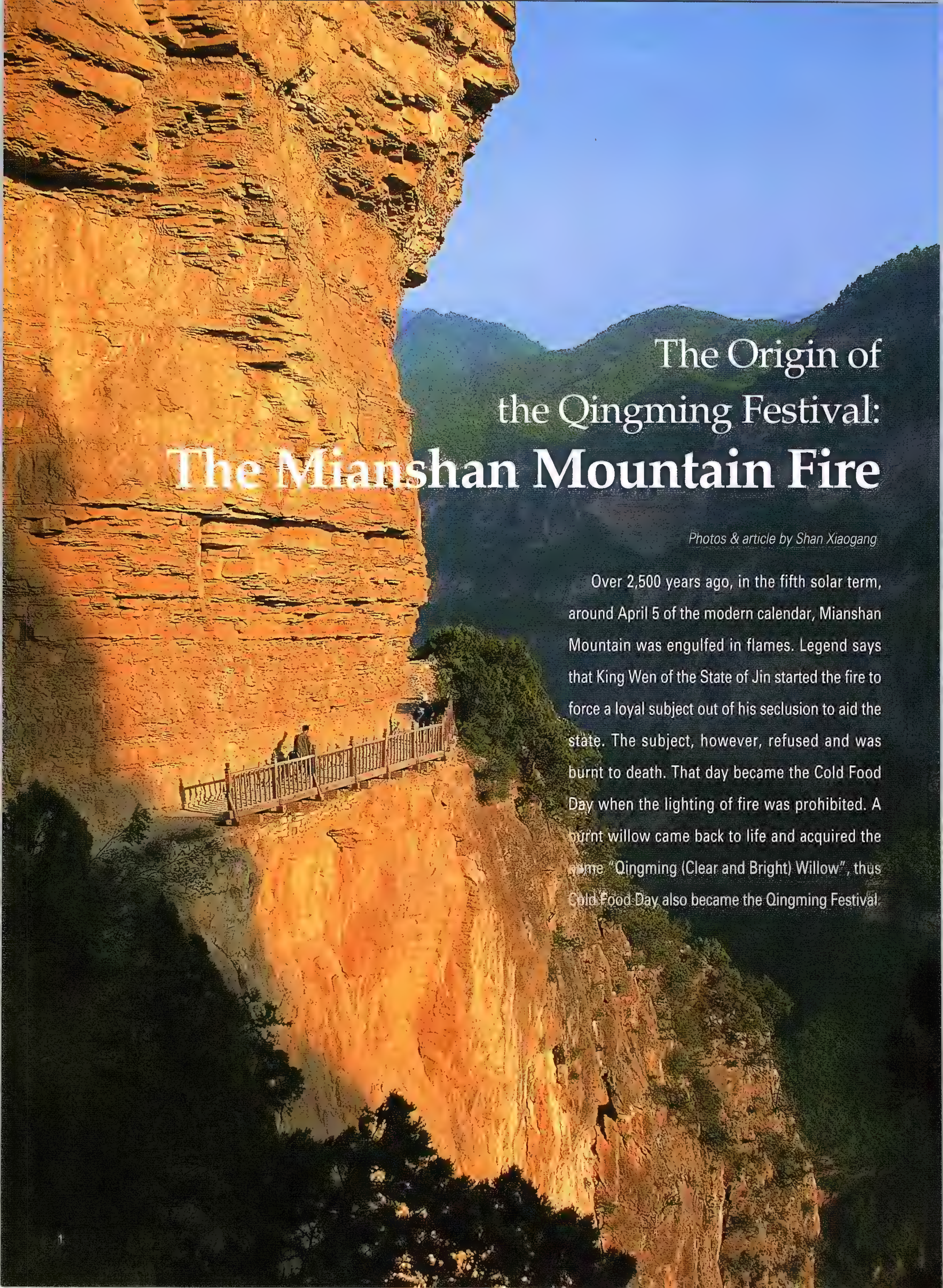
Tips for the Traveller

Transport: Fly to Kunming, then take a sleeper-bus to Simao. Bus services are available from Simao to Ximeng with a ride of eight hours. To reach Bagedai, you need to hire a vehicle.

Accommodation: There are hotels in the county town.

Note: An entry permit is required for visiting this border area. Travellers from Hong Kong and overseas can get their permits at the Kunming Airport or the Public Security Office in Simao.

1. Senior Va women enjoy pipe smoking. (by Zhong Jintang)
2. Weaving — the primitive way (by Liu Jianming)



The Origin of
the Qingming Festival:
The Mianshan Mountain Fire

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

Over 2,500 years ago, in the fifth solar term, around April 5 of the modern calendar, Mianshan Mountain was engulfed in flames. Legend says that King Wen of the State of Jin started the fire to force a loyal subject out of his seclusion to aid the state. The subject, however, refused and was burnt to death. That day became the Cold Food Day when the lighting of fire was prohibited. A burnt willow came back to life and acquired the name "Qingming (Clear and Bright) Willow", thus Cold Food Day also became the Qingming Festival.

Two Festivals Arise from Fire

Shanxi Province is also called Jin, as it was the territory of the State of Jin of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.). The burning of Mianshan Mountain is a widely-known story about a virtuous minister named Jie Zhitui of the State of Jin.

The exiled Prince Chong'er (who later became King Wen of the State of Jin) had been followed by a loyal minister, Jie Zhitui, for 19 years. They endured great difficulties and near-starvation together. But when the prince finally became ruler of Jin and gave rewards and titles to his loyal followers, Jie was overlooked under unexplained circumstances. The indignant Jie went off to Mianshan Mountain to live in seclusion with his mother. The deeply regretful king sent a search party and even searched himself, but Jie steadfastly refused to come out.

In a moment of desperation, thinking of Jie as a dutiful son, the king set fire to the mountain, expecting Jie would be forced out. The fire burned for three days, and eventually Jie was found, burnt to death with his mother, lying under a big willow tree in a deep valley.

Deeply remorseful of his rash action, the king had a pair of clogs made from the burnt willow to remind him of Jie Zhitui forever. The king renamed the mountain as Jieshan, and Dingyang County, as Jiexiu County. In commemoration of Jie, the day he had set fire on the mountain was named Cold Food Day, a day when people were prohibited from lighting a fire.

The following year, King Wen revisited Mianshan Mountain. At the foot of the mountain he and his subjects ate only cold food for a day. The next day, at Jie's grave, they found that the burnt willow had come back to life. Deeply moved, the king named the willow the "Qingming (Clear and Bright) Willow" and the day, the Qingming Festival.

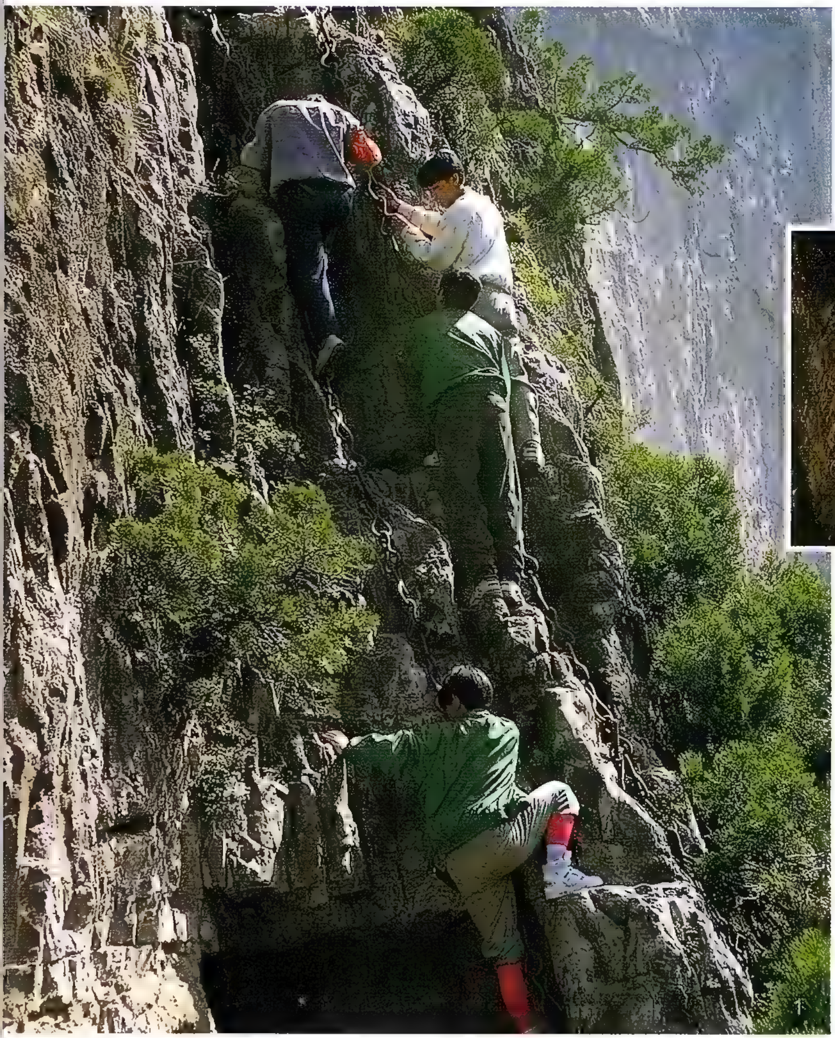
Deeply remorseful of his rash action, King Wen of Jin had a pair of clogs made from the burnt willow to remind him of Jie Zhitui forever. He also established Cold Food Day, when people were prohibited from lighting a fire.

Rabbit and Deer Bridges

From a distance, Mianshan Mountain stands like a giant screen extending from north to south, presenting a magnificent sight. To go up the mountain you can take a bus from Jiexiu and alight at the Dragon Head Nunnery.

From the Dragon Head Nunnery, you have to proceed on foot for five kilometres along a dangerous path hewn into the cliff face. On the other side of the valley are overlapping precipices with patches of green grass and trees. As the sun shines from different angles, constantly changing pictures of natural scenery emerge. All

1. Perpendicular cliffs rise above and drop below Deer Bridge in Mianshan Mountain.
2. The story of Jie Zhitui, retold for generations on Mianshan Mountain, is still warmly received.
3. Food shops along the plank path leading into the mountain offer local Jiexiu refreshments.
4 The Burning of Mianshan, a traditional Shanxi opera, is performed in an ancient temple.



Two iron chains hang down the sheer cliff as a quick way to the top of Mianshan Mountain. When climbers ascend, the chains knock on the rock and produce a deep, metallic sound which can be heard in the Buddha-Embracing Temple.

along the path there is spring drinking water from the so-called "milk-dripping beehives". There are also the Zhongyan Temple built at the cliff edge and the Baiyun (White Cloud) Cave dug into the cliff.

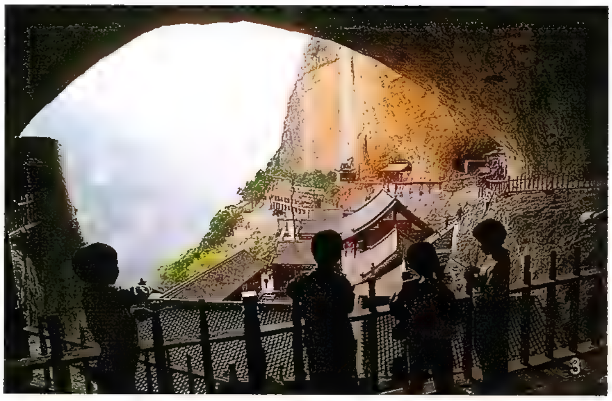
There are two bridges along the way, the Rabbit Bridge and the Deer Bridge, suspended across precipices. They shake and creak as people walk on them. Legend says a monk named Tian Shanyou was the former abbot of the Hongji Temple on Silver Ingot Mountain in central Shanxi in the early Tang Dynasty (618-907). But no-one ever saw him carrying water up this arid mountain. A curious man hid one night and saw a rabbit and a deer carrying water in a bell to the temple. To enable the monk to go to the Buddha-Embracing Cave deep in Mianshan Mountain the rabbit and deer stretched themselves across sheer precipices and became the Rabbit and Deer bridges. The monk later attained enlightenment on Mianshan Mountain.

Echoes of Iron Chains

The Buddha-Embracing Rock is a natural rock cave halfway up the mountain. The Cloudy Peak Temple is built inside the cave. When there is a downpour outside, it is perfectly dry inside. When the sun shines, spring water seeps through the fissures in the rock and flows down the buildings' eaves, making the courtyards wet.

A plank path is built in the east-west direction halfway up the wall of the cave, linking the temple buildings' eaves. At each end of the path is a bell tower. On the eastern side is a row of temple structures built in spaces hewn into the rock face. In the smaller grottoes inside each hall are enshrined Buddhist sculptures. Looking out from the cave, you can see the Cloudy Peak Temple below and the deep valley in front, where mountain streams flow all year round. Hanging on the cave's arched ceiling are innumerable, small bronze bells, which ring musically in the wind and produce melodious echoes in the valley. Reportedly the monk Tian Shanyou played chess with the Sacred Mother of Five Dragons here. After losing, the Sacred Mother agreed to evacuate the rock for him but Five Dragons refused, intending to crush the cave. A protruding rock saved Tian, who had already become a Buddha. The original Belly-Embracing Rock was changed to Buddha-Embracing Rock.

On the western side of the cave, above the Temple of Jie Zhitui, is the Iron Chains Rock. Two iron chains hang down the sheer cliff as the quick way to the top of Mianshan. When the iron chains are pulled by climbers, they knock on the rock and produce a deep, metallic sound which reaches the Buddha-Embracing Temple and echoes in the valley.



Herb Gatherers and Cliff Bells

April 20 is the opening day of the Cloudy Peak Temple Fair. In the first morning light, believers were already filing up the mountain to pay homage to the Buddha. Suddenly, drums boomed and firecrackers popped as people rushed into the temple. Before long, someone threw a rope down from the top of the rock. As people watched, someone quickly tied the rope around his chest and began to lower himself down the rocky cliff. At the correct place, he tied a small bell decorated with a red silk ribbon on a wooden peg inserted in the cliff. This stooping old man then landed skilfully on the ground.

Since ancient times, believers traditionally redeem a vow to the Buddha by hanging a bell on the cliff at the Cloudy Peak Temple. Those hired to hang the bells are from families that have worked for generations as medicinal herb gatherers, who are also highly skilled cliff climbers.

Between Heaven and Earth

The ruins of the Iron Tile and Bamboo Grove temples at Shangfangyuan on Mianshan Mountain reminded me a Jin-dynasty poem: "With green peaks soaring like swords all around; The temple rests on a small piece of flat ground. A railing extends as if into the clouds; To overlook mysterious scenes between heaven and earth..."

Following a stone path, I walked deeper into the mountain. Along the way are the dazzling Sacrificing Cliff, the Water-Curtain Terrace, Tian Shanyou's Preaching Terrace and Five Dragons Hollow enclosed by five mountain peaks. At the end of the valley is a pool surrounded by mountain peaks, which is said to be the hidden place of the Sacred Mother of Five Dragons.

I was told that a private entrepreneur in Jiexiu, a coal magnate and devoted Buddhist, has invested 100 million yuan of his own money in the reconstruction and development of the entire Mianshan Mountain Scenic Area.

1. Climbing up the cliff on two iron chains is a most exciting adventure.
2. Hanging bells on the cliff face is a very daring event of the Cloudy Peak Temple Fair. Gatherers of medicinal herbs are usually hired by people to redeem a vow to the Buddha.
3. The Buddha-Embracing Rock is like a huge awning sheltering a big Buddhist temple.
4. The setting sun gives a mysterious touch to the mountain valley.

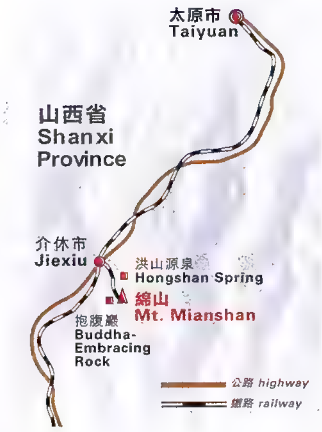
Tips for the Traveller:

Transportation: Trains go from Beijing or Taiyuan to Jiexiu and buses from Jiexiu go up Mianshan Mountain. You can explore the mountain itself on foot.

Lodging: Visitors can stay at the new hotel in the Cloudy Peak Temple on Mianshan Mountain or the Jiexiu Hotel in Jiexiu. Both are medium priced.

Other Tour Sites: Besides scenic spots on Mianshan Mountain, there are the Tang-dynasty Huiluan (Emperor Returning Temple) at the mountain's foot; Zhangbi Fortress, a well-preserved ancient fortress-like village complete with walls, tunnels, temples and residential areas in the mountain's south; Temple of the Empress' Land with its magnificent Ming-dynasty architecture and sculptures; and Xuanshen Tower in Chengguan Street of Jiexiu, an extremely ingenious and unusual building.

Special Products: Wulingzhi is a precious traditional herbal medicine. The juicy meat pie is a Jiexiu speciality. The Xianhengyong Rice Wine here won a silver medal at an international fair during the Qing Dynasty.



Melodious Ancient Music of the Xun

The Oldest Chinese Musical Instrument

China has many ancient musical instruments, including the 2,400-year-old chimes from the State of Chu unearthed in Suizhou, Hubei Province, and the lute and zither mentioned in the *Book of Songs*. But the xun is the oldest found so far.

The xun has its origin in the hunting stones. As there were natural cavities in the stones, the early people used to hit the animals, a whistling sound was produced when the stone flew in the air. This gave these early people the idea of making the musical instrument, the xun.

The Xun Had Almost Disappeared

The earliest xun was very simply made and could produce only a single note. From the three xuns unearthed at Jingcun Village in Wanquan County, Shanxi Province, we can gain some idea about the course of development of the xun. According to archaeological studies, the three xuns belong to the period before the Yin Dynasty (16th-11th century B.C.). The first one has a tube shape with only a blowing hole and can produce only one note. The second is oval with one note hole in addition to the blowing hole. The third is oblate and has two note holes.

The pottery xuns of the later period have several note holes. By the time of the Yin Dynasty they had five note holes, which can produce the complete seven-note scale. The xun with six note holes of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) existed for several thousand years.

The xun was popular among the common people and even had its place in court orchestras. It could be played in an ensemble or solo. By the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the xun had been forgotten. In the 1930s and 1940s, it was on the verge of extinction and was heard no more in public performances.

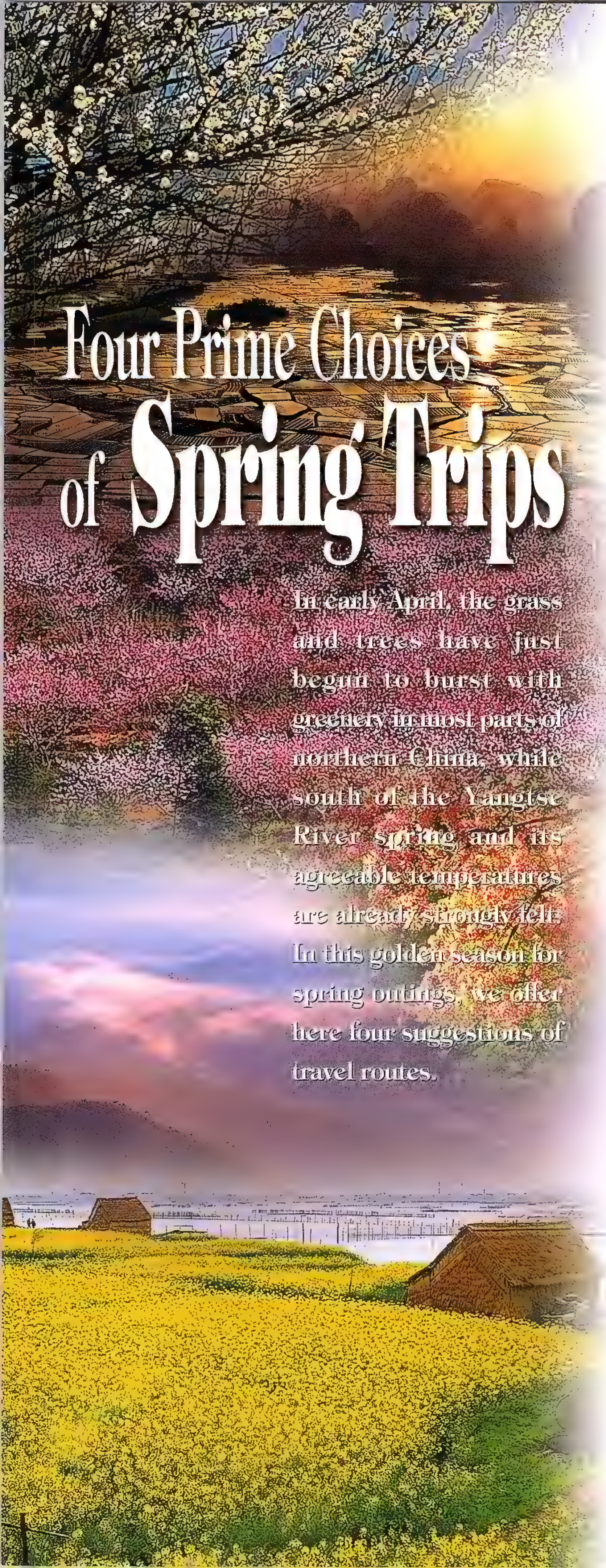
The Renewed Xun Brings Good Music

At the Olympic Games ceremony in Los Angeles, USA, in 1984, Du Ciwen, a master performer from China, played *The Song of the State of Chu* on the xun. The music echoed throughout the stadium as if from remote antiquity. Very few Chinese had ever seen the exotic musical instrument, never mind people of other countries. Many Americans said it was the most wonderful music they had ever heard.

In recent years, the xun has been used in formal stage performances. More and more music composers have included it in their works. The research into and performances with the xun have also entered a new stage. Many artists have been very successful in making and performing with the xun. A man named Zhang Ronghua is a real xun fanatic. Based on the nine-hole xun made by the ancients, he made improvements using new material and more rational, scientific methods. The quality of the xuns made with totally new technology are better than ever. The new xun takes little effort to play and its graceful shape brings good music and beauty together. It produces a purer sound, melodious in tone and larger in volume, and does not need a microphone or amplifier to magnify it. Complete and accurate in the 12 tones, it is harmonious in musical ensembles, and has high sensitivity.

Left: The xun made by Mr. Zhang Ronghua is both a musical instrument and an art work.

1. **Master player Du Ciwen selects his xun made by Zhang Ronghua for his performance at the Atlanta Olympic Games ceremony.**
2. **Zhang Ronghua and his wife work together to make the best xuns.**
3. **The two daughters of Zhang Ronghua have learned the xun-making techniques from their father.**

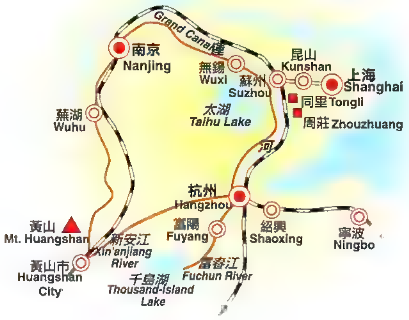


Four Prime Choices of Spring Trips

In early April, the grass and trees have just begun to burst with greenery in most parts of northern China, while south of the Yangtse River spring, and its agreeable temperatures are already strongly felt. In this golden season for spring outings, we offer here four suggestions of travel routes.

Spring Comes to Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui

Article by Liu Fengqun


Grand Canal 運河
南京 Nanjing
無錫 Wuxi
蘇州 Suzhou
昆山 Kunshan
上海 Shanghai
同里 Tongli
周莊 Zhouzhuang
蕪湖 Wuhu
太湖 Taihu Lake
杭州 Hangzhou
黃山 Mt. Huangshan
黃山市 Huangshan City
新安江 Xin'anjiang River
富陽 Fuyang
紹興 Shaoxing
寧波 Ningbo
富春江 Fuchun River
千島湖 Thousand-Island Lake

I take pleasure in writing down my own travel experiences to share with other travellers who may want to take a simple and easy, independent trip to East China to appreciate the unique and elegant scenery of the region.

The best way to start is to first fly to Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province, and visit Shaoxing and Thousand-Island Lake in its vicinity and perhaps Mount Huangshan to the west. Heading north, you stop at Suzhou, Wuxi, Tongli and Zhouzhuang and fly home from Shanghai. A trip like this takes about 10 days.

Hangzhou: Spend a day and a half touring the West Lake, Hupao (Tiger Running) Spring, Lingyin (Soul-Retreat) Temple, Liuhe Pagoda, Yuquan (Jade Spring), Yunqi Zhujing (Cloud Lingering Bamboo Path), Jiuxi Shibajian (Nine Creeks and Eighteen Gullies) as well as the Longjing (Dragon Well) Village. Each of these sites is conveniently accessible by bus.

Don't forget to try the Dragon Well Tea brewed with water from Tiger Running Spring. You may want to buy the Lion Peak Dragon Well Tea directly from the local tea farmers at the Dragon Well Village, for the price will be only half that in the stores.

After seeing the inner city, you also have the choice of joining one of the short-trip tours arranged by tourist hotels. The most reasonable ones include:

* One-day trip to the Yaolin Fairyland: 22 yuan per person for the bus fare (admission not included);

* Two-day trip to the Thousand-Island Lake: 138 yuan per person (bus, hotel and guide all included);

* Four-day trip to Mount Huangshan: 300 yuan (including bus, hotel and guide).

Shaoxing: Trains going to Shaoxing from Hangzhou cover the distance in one hour; a ticket costs 13 yuan. The neat and orderly city of Shaoxing is famous for its elegant bridges, canals and houses built with stones, which combine to provide a unique character.

Not to be missed is a meal at the Xianheng Restaurant which is known for the rice wine, smelly bean curd, drunken chicken and aniseed-flavoured beans.

Suzhou: An alternative choice to get to Suzhou from Hangzhou is to travel on the Grand Canal. Every day, a ship sets sail from Hangzhou at 5:30 p.m. For 67 yuan, you get a berth in an air-conditioned four-person compartment. The ship arrives in Suzhou at 6 a.m. next morning. Once in Suzhou, the No. 102 bus will take you to the hotels near the train station. Small hotels without private bathrooms charge 65 yuan per night.

From the train station, there are buses going to all major scenic sites. Suzhou is known for its gardens — the Zhuozheng Garden, Liuyuan Garden, Wangshi Garden, Canglang Garden and Lion Woods. Besides, other sites such as the Tiger Hill, North Temple Pagoda, Hanshan Temple and Lake Taihu at the East Hill, can all be reached by bus with the help of a map.

Wuxi: If you are tired of gardens and want something different, then take a day to visit Wuxi. There are many daily buses heading from Suzhou Railway Station to Wuxi. The ride takes about an hour and half and costs 10 yuan. The train ride, about 40 minutes, costs 5 yuan.

At the Wuxi Train Station, there are buses going to every tourist site. I took a bus to the famous Three Kingdoms City and Outlaws of the Marsh City by Taihu Lake. The admission at each of these tourist attractions is 60 yuan. I also had the best bean curd soup ever; it can be either sweet or spicy, and costs only 3 yuan per serving.

Tongli: Like Zhouzhuang, Tongli is also a famous little town in a water-bound region, but being less busy and less populated, it has maintained its original simple lifestyle. A ride by minibus from the Wuxian City Bus Terminal on Renmin Road in Suzhou to Tongli takes 50 minutes and costs 8 yuan.

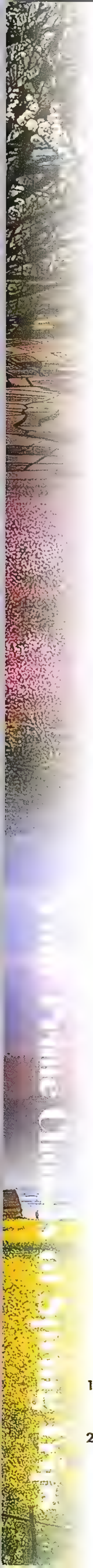
Thanks to the relatively few tourists, those who do go there can have a peaceful time appreciating the Tuisi (Retreat for Thinking) Garden, Chongben Hall and three famous bridges. There are several antique stores along the small lanes and the restaurants offer some unique local delicacies.

Zhouzhuang: There is no direct bus service from Tongli to Zhouzhuang. You must return to Suzhou to catch a bus for a three-hour ride to Zhouzhuang. An alternative is to go to Kunshan (about an hour from Suzhou; cost 7 yuan) where there are many buses to Zhouzhuang.

Another way to travel is to hire a boat to go from Tongli to Zhouzhuang. The one-way trip is more expensive, at 250 yuan, but the cost can be shared among several travellers.

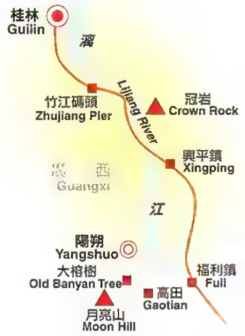
In Zhouzhuang, one example of a local hotel is Fuhong Hotel, which charges 45 yuan per person, for a double room without private bathroom, during the slack season. Outside its windows are lovely views of typical houses and small bridges spanning the canals. In the evening when most of the tourists have left, the town is really quiet. Try the local delicacies.

1. **The golden rapeseed flowers by Taihu Lake blossom for more than a month. (by Xie Guanghui)**
2. **Peach and plum trees are in full bloom in southern Anhui. (by Xie Guanghui)**
3. **Painters often come to Zhouzhuang to find inspiration. (by Xie Guanghui)**



Guilin: Where Clear Waters Reflect Graceful Hills

Photos & article by Ye Ziqing



Guilin, known for its incomparable beauty of graceful hills and crystal-clear waters, is a unique spring outing destination. In April, Guilin is still refreshingly cool.

There are daily flights between Guilin and major cities in China, including Hong Kong. Four-star and five-star hotels in Guilin charge around 800 yuan per day while the two-star and three-star ones cost 200 to 300 yuan. In addition, there are also small hotels that charge only 30 to 100 yuan a day. A four-day tour in this area is truly worthwhile.

Day 1: After arrival in Guilin, take a leisurely tour of the inner-city scenic sites such as the Elephant Trunk Hill, Diecai Hill and Fubo Hill. If time allows visit also two karst caves, the Seven-Star Cave and Bamboo Flute Cave. Spend the evening visiting markets, and try the rice flour noodles. Besides being a great bargain at about 2 yuan per bowl, they also offer a special flavour.

Day 2: Take a mini-bus to Zhujiang Pier for a cruise on the Lijiang River. Cruise tickets can be bought from your hotel or at street ticket stands for about 250 yuan per person. This price includes a one-way cruise, lunch on the boat and the return ticket on the bus. You may also stay in Yangshuo and tour its vicinity.

Day 3: In and around Yangshuo there are many interesting destinations, such as Gaotian, the Old Banyan Tree and Moon Hill. You may also rent a four-speed mountain bike for 6 to 8 yuan. The slopes in the area are generally rather gentle and do not require much effort. This way you can stop anywhere and whenever you like, to take photos or have a snack.

In Yangshuo the most expensive hotel charges 300 to 500 yuan, while some hotels have 100-yuan rooms that are equipped with all essential facilities. There are many food courts serving local delicacies, such as meat cooked with grapefruit peel and Lijiang River fish cooked with beer.

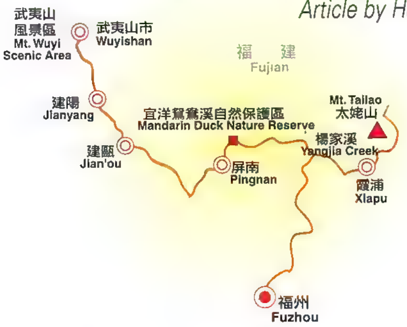
Day 4: Take a boat in the morning and sail downstream on the Lijiang River. In about 50 minutes, the boat pulls in at the ancient town of Fuli, whose main street is permeated with simple and aged architecture and lifestyles.

From Yangshuo you can visit another ancient town, Xingping.

1. The Lijiang River outside the ancient town of Fuli
2. Idyllic scenery at Gaotian

New Spring Outing Route in Northern Fujian

Article by Han Jing



Wuyi Mountain has long been associated with spring outings. Today, a new route for spring outings links up Wuyi Mountain and Yuanyang (Mandarin Duck) Creek with the newly opened-up Yangjia Creek and Tailao Mountain, offering a completely new way to enjoy spring in northern Fujian Province.

The eight-day trip itinerary:

Day 1: Fly to Wuyishan from major cities in China

Day 2: Morning: visit Tiandu Peak and Peach Cave. Afternoon: take a ride on a bamboo raft on the Nine-Bend Stream.

Day 3: Morning: tour Wuyi Mountain Tea Garden and take a look at the "Great Red Robe" tea tree; pick tea leaves in the garden. Afternoon: taste tea at the Imperial Teahouse and watch the tea-serving performance.

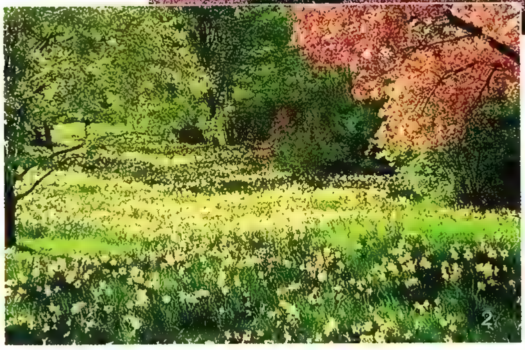
Day 4: Early morning: set out by bus to Pingnan County about 230 kilometres away. Have lunch at Gutian and arrive in Pingnan in the afternoon. The natural scenery along the way, in particular the peach blossoms covering the mountain slopes, is a feast for the eyes. Check into Pingnan Hotel for the night.

Day 5: Morning: travel 17 kilometres to the Mandarin Duck Creek, a place of tranquillity and beauty. The waterfall and the Baishui Pool are the major scenic sites. Afternoon: set out to Xiapu about 220 kilometres away. Upon arrival check into the Longshoushan (Dragon-Head Hill) Hotel.

Day 6: Go to Yangjia Creek Scenic Area, 32 kilometres outside the county seat. Enjoy the cruise on a bamboo raft and the views of aged banyan tree groves, maple forest, and camphor forest on the banks, and get the feel of the lifestyle in the ancient towns.

Day 7: Early morning: take the 36-kilometre-ride by bus to the Tailao Mountain. By noon, you will have the summit under your feet. In the evening take the sleeper bus at the foot of the mountain to Wenzhou, 167 kilometres away in Zhejiang Province.

Day 8: Depart from Wenzhou



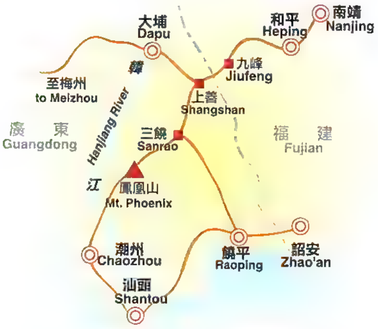
Tips for the Traveller

All the counties and cities along this new route have tourism bureaus and travel agencies, who offer easy access to accommodation and food in government guesthouses or star-rated hotels. You can travel by public bus or hire a car (which may be economical for groups).

1. Peach blossoms dominate the view between the Wuyi Mountain and the Mandarin Duck Creek. (by Wang Miao)
2. The newly-developed Yangjia Creek Scenic Area boasts a valley filled with wild narcissus. (by Han Jing)
3. Wuyi Mountain's peaks shrouded in mist have a special charm. (by Shan Xiaogang)
4. Among the four seasons, spring brings the most visitors to Wuyi Mountain. (by Chan Yat Nin)

Tea Picking and Rice Planting on the Fujian-Guangdong Border

Photos by Lin Jinghua Article by Li Fang


大埔
Dapu
和平
Heping
南靖
Nanjing
九峰
Jiufeng
至梅州
to Meizhou
上善
Shangshan
廣東
Guangdong
韓
Hanjiang River
江
三饒
Sanrao
福建
Fujian
鳳凰山
Mt. Phoenix
潮州
Chaozhou
饒平
Raoping
詔安
Zhao'an
汕頭
Shantou

Many people love to visit Chaozhou and Shantou in Guangdong Province while others are interested in visiting Xiamen in Fujian Province. The area between these two regions, however, is seldom visited by tourists. If an opportunity ever comes your way, do not miss the chance to see this border region, for this mountainous area has its unique charm in spring.

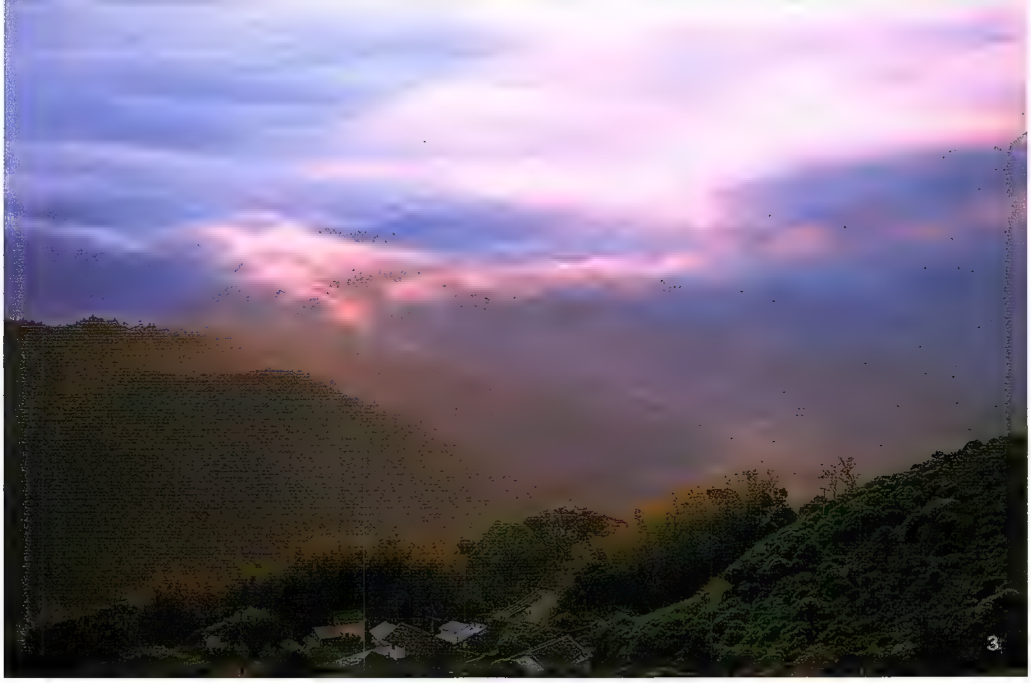
Phoenix Mountain: Home of 'Single Phoenix Leaf'

Once arrive in Chaozhou, the first thing you should do is find a restaurant to taste the local delicacies. After a meal, Chaozhou tea is brought to the table. The tea served here is a local product known as the Single Phoenix Leaf, whose aroma and taste are always a special treat.

Early April is just the right season for picking tea leaves. To take a Spring Tea Tour, contact the Chaozhou branch of China Travel Service at the Overseas Chinese Tower. You may join a tour or hire a car and go by yourself. It is most enjoyable to travel around the entire border region between Fujian and Guangdong with several friends in a hired car. This way, you can stop and stay anywhere you like along the route.

The very best Phoenix tea comes from Wudong Village at the summit of the Phoenix Mountain. Rising more than 1,000 metres above sea level, the

1. Early to mid-April is the rice planting season in the mountainous regions between Fujian and Guangdong. (by Li Fang)
2. The border region between Fujian and Guangdong is home to the Hakka people who are mostly farmers and traditionally attaching great importance to education.



mountain is always shrouded in mist and the moisture in the air nourishes the tea leaves. Buying a kilogram of the Single Phoenix Leaf tealeaves from the farmers in the village can cost 200 yuan less than in the tea shops in downtown Chaozhou.

Circular Houses: Bastion in the Mountains

Coming down from Phoenix Mountain, and travelling northward around Sanrao Township, soon you cross the border into Jiufeng Town of Fujian Province. On the way, there are clusters of walled houses of the Hakkas. Big or small, these houses with particularly tall and thick walls all appear circular from the outside, resembling ancient castles.

Houses of such architectural style and owned by the Hakka people can be found in Meixian, Dapu and Raoping in eastern Guangdong and Pinghe, Yongding and Nanjing in southern Fujian, especially in the mountainous areas. When travelling on the highway between Raoping and Pinghe, you will come across such houses now and then.

Terraced Fields: A Scenic Attraction

In the big valleys on the Fujian-Guangdong border region, terraced fields dominate the terrain. From early to mid-April, it is the time to irrigate the terraced rice paddies for the spring planting. Clear water in the chequered fields, which undulate with the mountains, sparkles against the sun, providing a magnificent view. There is a bus that goes to Xiamen via Zhangzhou from Pinghe.

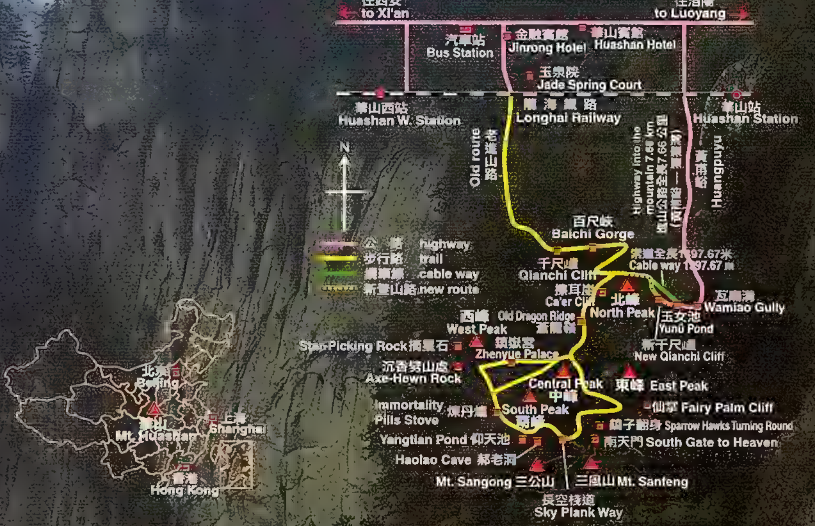
In Chaozhou, the Overseas Chinese Tower has rooms with rates around 200 yuan per night. In Pinghe, there are government-owned hotels at the rate of about 120 yuan per night. All the towns you pass have restaurants featuring Hakka dishes.

Translated by Fred Huang

Tips for the Traveller

A hired car is most useful, for the best scenery is always found in the wilderness of the mountains.

3. Shrouded in mist all year round, Wudong Village on Phoenix Mountain is an ideal place to cultivate tea. (by Li Fang)
4. The evening glow casting its rays on the terraced fields
5. The Single Phoenix Leaf is one of the best of all teas. Half a kilogram may cost 1,000 yuan! (by Li Fang)
6. Today, the once-terraced rice paddies have been turned into orchards of oranges and grapefruits.


往西安
to Xi'an
往洛陽
to Luoyang
汽車站
Bus Station
金融賓館
Jinrong Hotel
華山賓館
Huashan Hotel
玉泉院
Jade Spring Court
華山西站
Huashan W. Station
隴海鐵路
Longhai Railway
華山站
Huashan Station
N
Old route
Highway into the mountain 7.66 km
Huangpuyu
黃甫峪
公路 highway
步行路 trail
纜車線 cable way
新登山路 new route
百尺峽
Baichi Gorge
千尺幢
Qianchi Cliff
擦耳崖
Ca'er Cliff
北峰
North Peak
瓦廟溝
Wamiao Gully
玉女池
Yunü Pond
西峰
West Peak
Old Dragon Ridge
蒼龍嶺
Star-Picking Rock 摘星石
鎮嶽宮
Zhenyue Palace
新千尺幢
New Qianchi Cliff
Axe-Hewn Rock
Central Peak
中峰
東峰 East Peak
Fairy Palm Cliff
Immortality Pills Stove 煉丹爐
South Peak
南峰
Sparrow Hawks Turning Round
Yangtian Pond 仰天池
南天門 South Gate to Heaven
Haolao Cave 郝老洞
Mt. Sangong 三公山
Mt. Sanfeng
長空棧道
Sky Plank Way
北京
Beijing
華山
Mt. Huashan
上海
Shanghai
香港
Hong Kong

New Roads Lead to Mount Huashan

One mention of Mount Huashan, and the saying will come to most people's minds: "Since ancient times there is one, and only one, road leading to Mount Huashan." This famous saying, however, has not proved eternally true. Today, great changes have taken place and there are three roads leading to the famed mountain.

Reaching this famous Taoist holy site by the newly constructed Huangpuyu Highway, the visitor can take a cable car directly up the North Peak. To view the entire mountain from such an advantageous point gives you enormous joy.

A flight of stone steps has been built along the route described in the film *Conquering Mt. Huashan Intelligently*, extending to the North Peak.

For the brave ones with plentiful energy who want to personally feel the breathtaking impact of the mountain, there is the old road for climbing up. They may come down by cable car to avoid repeating their route and the hassles of coming down the sheer mountain.

Up to the North Peak in the Wink of an Eye

Photos & article by Li Youxiang

3

The train arrived at the Huashan Station at dawn. From the platform of the station, we could have a vague view of the so-called "No. 1 perilous mountain under heaven".

Coming out of the railway station, we took a minibus and travelled six kilometres to the east foot of the mountain. There, we changed to a tourist bus and drove for eight kilometres along the Huangfuyu Highway to Xingxinggou (Orangutan Gully). Xingxinggou is the down-end terminal of the Huashan Cable Way and also the starting point from which the People's Liberation Army set out to capture Mt. Huashan by strategy in 1949. The Huashan Cable Way, which was imported from Austria, operates smoothly without any noise. The span between the five Hercules-like gigantic frame towers is very large and the cable way reached directly to the mountain-top terminal on the North Peak. Hanging down from the cable are some dozens of transparent closed-type cable cars, going up and down in the mountain valley like a string of bubbles. Taking this "taxi in air", visitors can save both energy and time to get to the top of the peak, from which they can climb further up the mountain on foot. The entire journey takes only six hours.

4

Drifting in the Air

When we approached the bubble-like cable cars, I found they were actually big enough to hold six people. With the cable car slowly going up, the two gigantic granite cliffs, which a moment ago looked so imposing, turned out to be commonplace. Looking back, the terminal building also gradually shrank in size, looking like a child's toy.

Our cable car had passed a frame tower. It rose higher as the mountain valley on both sides continuously drew back. This made me feel as if I were drifting in the air, and that I seemed to be able to "fly over" any peak ahead of us.

With the moving of the cable car, our views of the precipitous Mt. Huashan changed all the time. It was indeed a unique experience. For a moment, the cable car came so close to a sheer cliff that we were even able to see clearly the texture of the rock. I watched down attentively and saw groups of tourists who were climbing up the North Peak following the road that the People's Liberation Army soldiers had taken 50 years ago. Looking so small, they worked their way with great efforts.

Finally, the cable car passed the last frame tower and moved smoothly to the terminal on top of the Northern Peak.

It took us only less than 10 minutes to make it. Without the cable way, however, it would take us at least two hours to get to the top of the peak on foot.

North Peak: Crowded with Visitors

The North Peak is formed by several gigantic pieces of granite. It is a gathering as well as rest place for people going up or down the mountain. The flat top of the peak was crowded with tourists. Some took pictures, others had meals in the North Peak Restaurant.

Among the tourists was a big family of more than 10 members, who just came down from the mountain. They asked me to take a family picture for them. They were a family of three generations from the grassland of Inner Mongolia. The eldest member of the family was over 70 while the youngest was a loveable grandson, just over three years old.

An old couple came down from the mountain. When they saw that I was a correspondent, the old man said to me, in a manner typical to veteran revolutionaries, "Thanks to the local government and people of Huashan for doing such a good deed for visitors to Mount Huashan. Thanks to this cable way, I have seen my dream of many years coming true. When I go back home, I will tell my relatives and friends to come to visit this 'No. 1 perilous mountain under heaven'."

In the downhill trip, I took a cable car together with an old woman as well as her daughter and son-in-law. The old lady was in her 80s while her daughter and son-in-law were both over 60 years old. They had not only reached the top of the peak but also paid visits to other two scenic spots.

Many people have cherished the hope to climb up to the top of Mt. Huashan. Yet, as there used to be only one hazardous way to reach the top of the mountain, the majority of them could not go. Now, with this new "road in the air", they can all have their dreams come true at long last.

Translated by Li Zhenguo

1. **It takes eight minutes to reach the top of North Peak by cable way. To climb up the mountain on foot, you need two hours.**
2. **The steep Old Dragon Ridge viewed from West Peak (by Shi Baoxiu)**
3. **On the way to Yangtian Pond on South Peak**
4. **With the help of the cable way, even toddlers can reach the top of Huashan.**
5. **A frame tower on one side of North Peak**

5

Mount Huashan's Irresistible Charm

Photos by Li Youxiang
Article by Liu Fengqun

It was the middle of the tourist season in August 1998 when I travelled for 40 days across China. Amidst the economic downturn, I found myself with plenty of time to do touring. Of all the places I visited, Mount Huashan in Shaanxi struck me the most. While enjoying its incredible views, I forgot all my worries. It was an experience that remains fresh in my memory today.

Before setting out from Hong Kong, I read all I could find about Mount Huashan. There were vivid, detailed descriptions of the most strategic sites on the mountain, and the perpendicular cliffs and possible danger made me both excited and worried.

From the railway station at Shaanxi's capital, Xi'an, I boarded a tourist coach toward the foot of Mount Huashan. Before leaving, the guide told us stories about the mountain and the planned schedule. He said he would lead us to go up and down the mountain by cable car, which was about eight minutes each way. There would be some walking in between and we would come back to Xi'an on the same bus in the afternoon. Because of the weather of the season, he explained, the sunrise on the mountain could not be seen, so we did not have to spend the night at Huashan. Nobody objected except me; I told him that my companion Aji and I would walk up the mountain and spend the night there.

Two hours later, the bus let us off at the foot of the mountain; our fellow passengers continued on to the cable car terminal. We bought a map and chose the old road, which used to be the only way up Mount Huashan since ancient times. At exactly 12 noon, we started up the mountain.

The broad mountain path was well paved with granite, conspicuously facilitating the climbing. There were few visitors and the climate was pleasantly cool, which greatly lifted our spirits. About every 10 minutes along the route, there was a kiosk selling food, drinks and other basic things. There were also sun umbrellas and beach-style chairs for climbers to take a rest. The kiosks' operators tried to get our attention, but each time we simply smiled while continuing on our way. We also noticed that there were many toilets along the way which uniformly charged 50 cents. As for their hygienic conditions? Well, up the mountain, people should not have high expectations.

Since Mount Huashan has always been regarded as a holy ground of Taoism, there were many buildings with strong Taoist characteristics. Besides, there are many fairy tales and legends about the mountain which add to visitors' interest.

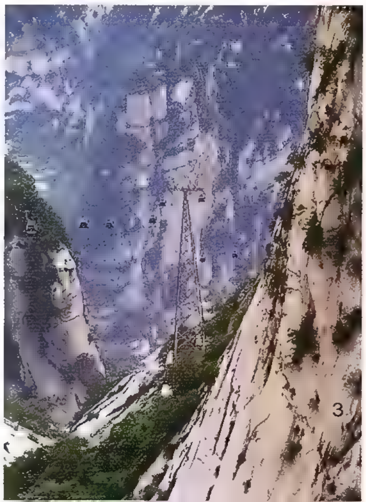
By the time we reached the Jinsuo (Golden Lock) Pass, the temperature had dropped and darkness had begun to descend. At 7 p.m., I stood atop the West Peak and faced a world of tranquillity with no-one around; clouds and mist kept gathering and drifting by. Feeling as if I was in a fairyland, I sat down to experience the mystical feeling of a monk in meditation.

That night we checked into the Zhenyue Hotel. Though simply furnished, it had adequate power and mountain spring water. We were grateful that there was warm food for dinner. We bargained down to 80 yuan for the night, well below the quoted rate of 150 yuan. We woke up at 4 a.m. and set out in the dark towards the East Peak for the sunrise.

Time ticked away and the sky was just a grey canopy. Then the rain washed away any hope of watching the sunrise. Our spirits were not dampened by the situation, for we knew there were other challenges to come.

Where Sparrow Hawks Turn Round

Not too far from the East Peak was a uniquely treacherous site known as Sparrow Hawks Turning Round. I looked down but the precipitous angle allowed no view at all. Aji gingerly made his way down, his shouts testifying to the danger. Soon it was my turn, and I held onto the iron railings tightly and put my feet into rock cracks or on railings. The trip down was most exhaustive. Besides, my body blocked my own view so I could not see where I should plant my feet. Good hand and foot co-ordination was required. Several times, my foot floated in the air until I could turn my body around the angles of the cliff while desperately hanging onto the iron chains. Looking down is definitely not recommended!



During the

1. It is a short way from the cable way terminal to the North Peak.
2. The author at Mind-Retrieving Rock (by Aji)
3. By taking the cable car, you can save time and have a panoramic view of the mountain from the air.
4. Watching sunrise on the top of East Peak
5. Climbing up the Sky Plank Way is a great challenge to visitors.

descent, when other travellers were coming up, people had to co-operate to avoid serious mishaps. This section seemed as long as a century before I finally came to flat ground. At a pavilion there, we studied the map and to our great shock, there was no road further ahead. We had to go back the same way we had come! The only thing I could do was rest longer to gather more energy and courage.

The Challenge of the Sky Plank Way

Having overcome the perilous cliff, my confidence shot up and I was ready for more challenges. We set out for the Sky Plank Way on the South Peak after a hearty meal at the South Gate to Heaven. When I saw a narrow road reinforced with iron railings on the sheer cliffs, I thought it was all of the Sky Plank Way and my heart sank with disappointment. Where was its legendary danger? Suddenly the group ahead stopped and the majority turned back. Only a few people remained. I walked up and only then did I realise what was ahead of us.

The prelude to the Sky Plank Way was a descent by an iron ladder, somewhat similar to Sparrow Hawks Turning Round, except that it was much longer and built at a much more menacing location. Our turn came and I gritted my teeth and descended through a thick fog which fortunately now enshrouded the mountain and blocked the perilous views.

From the flat rock we saw the plank way extending to the left. Now we had to co-ordinate our hands and feet, first climbing over a large rock. Beyond this rock lay the truly dangerous road of Mount Huashan. Two narrow planks were laid together, wide enough to allow only one person through. Built onto the mountain cliffs, the iron railings drilled into the mountain rock held the key to travellers' safety. To look at the plank way from a distance would send a chill down your spine, not to mention walking on it.

I felt that since I had come all this way, I could not give up now. Due to the plank way's narrowness, travellers in both directions had to carefully co-operate with each other. As there were many sharp twists and turns, people at either end could not see each other nor observe their position. To avoid an impasse, people shouted out loudly to make sure the way was clear. If there was no reply, you could walk forward. We waited quite a while till the five travellers who had walked ahead of us returned. Then we tightly grasped the iron railing and carefully moved one hand or foot first, keeping the body steadily supported by the rest three of the limbs. Looking down while making your way ahead might also cause you to lose confidence. Staying calm was essential. After a while, I was overtaken by the sense of the fresh experience of unprecedented danger. The view around me was fantastic, but I had no desire to risk my life for taking pictures.

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After about 10 minutes, we had the straight and flat section of the plank path behind us. Ahead, the last section had no planks, only holes dug into the cliff. I kept my hands tightly on the iron railing as I crept forward. The return trip was much easier, and back at our starting point, we cheered our success. What an unforgettable experience!

Next, we started the climb of the 2,160-metre-high pinnacle of Mount Huashan — the South Peak. When I finally had the summit under my feet, I bought myself a "gold medal" as a prize.

On this day, we had spent six hours visiting all major scenic sites. We decided to take the cable car down. The cable way obviously was built with a great investment. It is an Austrian mountain cable way complete with emergency safety equipment. We were at the foot of the mountain eight minutes later. It was a quick and safe return, which put a satisfying final touch to our exciting trip to Mount Huashan.

Translated by F. Huang

Tips for the Traveller

Transport

Express trains from Luoyang and Xi'an stop at the Huashan Railway Station. There are also bus services between the Xi'an Railway Station and Huashan.

Mount Huashan Climbing Routes

Route 1: This traditional road, starting about one kilometre from the train station, goes through Qingke Terrace, Thousand-Foot Cliff, Hundred-Foot Gorge and leads to the North Peak.

Route 2: This newly built mountain path, a short cut to the mountain, is connected with the Huangpuyu Highway.

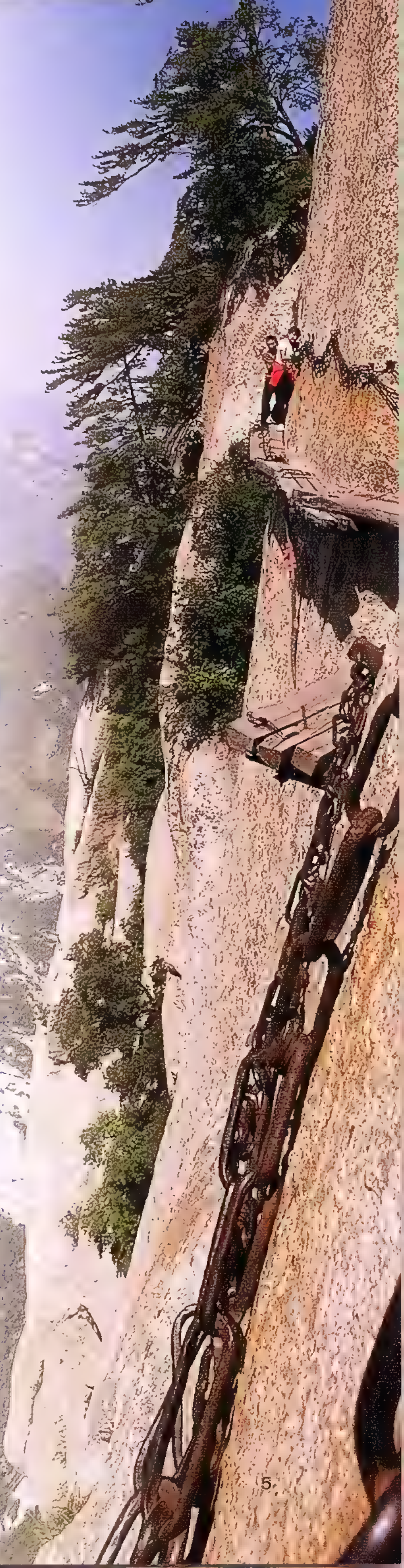
Route 3: This route also goes along the Huangpuyu Highway, but then to the cable car up the mountain.

Fees and Lodging

Mountain admission: 50 yuan.

Cable car: 45 yuan one way; 80 yuan return; Mini-bus between Huashan Railway Station and Cable Car Terminal: 10 yuan.

Accommodation: On the mountain: North Peak Hotel, 150 yuan; Lianhuaping Hotel, 250 yuan; East, West and Middle peaks' guest houses, 80 yuan; At the foot of the mountain: Jinrong Hotel, Huashan Hotel, 250 yuan.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Iron Balls from Baoding

Photos & article by Liu Hui

Baoding, a famous historical city in China, is located on the vast Central Hebei Plain to the south of Beijing. It has many places of historical interest, including the ancient Lotus-Flower Pond, which served as a temporary dwelling place of emperors Qianlong, Jiaqing and Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Lotus-Flower Academy of Classical Learning, the Hall of Great Benevolence, and the office of the former provincial governor-general. Moreover, there is one small thing, the iron ball, which has been listed as one of the local treasures and enjoys great popularity.

Originated from Walnuts

The origin of the iron balls is a long story. It is said that the embryonic form of the iron balls was a walnut. Later, as metallurgy developed in the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), the iron balls appeared. But it was not until the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) that detailed records of iron balls came into existence. In the book *Anecdotes of the Capital City*, it is clearly recorded how folk artists of the capital city (present-day Hangzhou) used iron balls: tossing and catching iron balls with both hands at flying speed. Later, rotating iron balls in the hands was found to be good for the health.

At the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), an unnamed skilful craftsman showed great ingenuity in adapting the solid iron balls into hollow ones, and adding thin steel pieces and smaller balls inside. He also made the iron balls in pairs, with one called *yin* and the other *yang* (or the male and the female). The hollow iron balls were lighter and could be easily held in the palms. When moved quickly round and round by the fingers, they produced a kind of sweet sound pleasing to the ear. These improved iron balls created quite a stir among the populace and became widespread, not only loved by common people but also admired by high officials and noble lords. For a time iron balls were regarded as a rare treasure, attracting the attention of princes, dukes and ministers of the court in Beijing, who also viewed them a tool for building good health.

According to historical records, Ji Xiaolan, tutor of the Qing Emperor Qianlong, recommended iron balls to the emperor as a health-improvement

tool. The emperor played with them every day and lived to the age of 86, while Ji Xiaolan lived to the age of 84 himself. People believed that the emperor and his tutor owed their longevity to the iron balls. So later, local officials of Baoding sent many pairs of iron balls as a tribute to the imperial court every year. But as the demand was increasing, the quantity sent was far from enough; as a result, master craftsmen were called from Baoding to Beijing to make iron balls especially for the imperial family.

Vital Role in Keeping Fit

Traditional Chinese medicine says that the body has main and collateral channels, through which vital energy circulates, and 12 main channels link up the four limbs with cranial nerves and vital internal organs. Of the 12 main channels, six are on the hand, i.e. three *yang* channels and three *yin* channels. They connect to the internal organs directly. When the iron balls are rotated in the hands, they stimulate different acupoints, which helps energy circulate through the channels to regulate bodily functions. This effectively prevents diseases in the respiratory and digestive systems, relieves or lessens mental fatigue, and restores the dynamics of the autonomic nerve system.

In Baoding today, every morning, many people are using iron balls to maintain and restore health. Yan Buyun is one of many iron ball practitioners in Baoding. Over 70 years old, he is a retired cadre from the No.1 Provincial Building Company and known as "The King of Iron Balls". Together with his friend, Gu Kang, 73, Yan has summarised a dozen methods of playing the iron balls, such as "rotating two balls in one hand", "rotating two balls in both hands", "rotating many balls at the same time", "holding three balls in the hand with two balls rolling and one jumping", and "holding four balls in the hand with three balls turning around to send the other rolling". They also developed the "Five Postures" for practising — sitting, walking, squatting, standing and laying down. Meanwhile, based on taiji boxing, they have choreographed a 24-step set of iron balls exercises for health. Like martial arts masters, they can hold over 30 rotating iron balls weighing a dozen kilograms in both hands at one time.

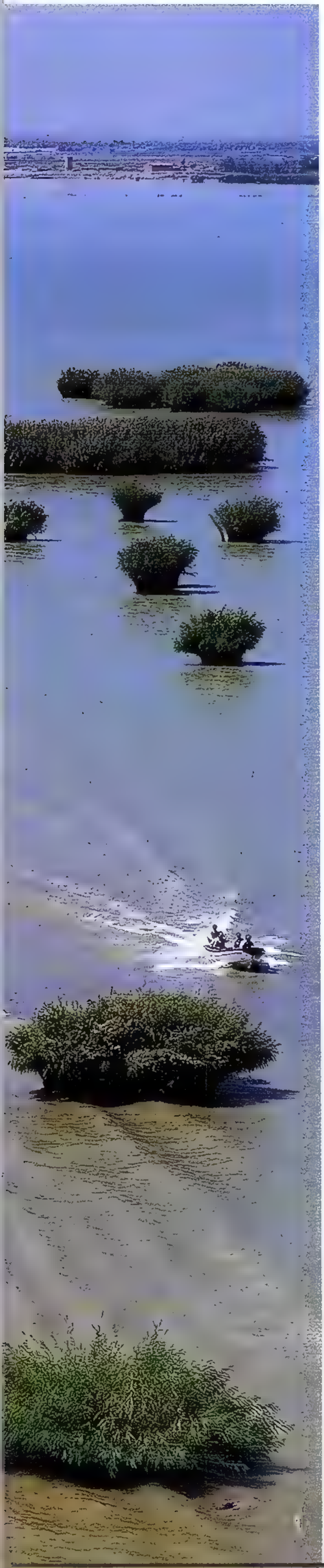
To promote health with iron balls, an international festival is held in Baoding in September every year. During the festival, enthusiasts from all parts of the world gather in this ancient city to exchange their experiences.

1. With the introduction of new technology, iron balls have greater variety these days.
2. Baoding Iron Balls Factory produces 100 different kinds of iron balls for health.
3. The Lotus-Flower Pond in Baoding is a famous ancient park in North China.
4. Yan Buyun, known as the "King of Iron Balls", performs the 24-step exercises.

The Wide-open Expanse around Yinchuan

Photos by Liu Xianchen Article by Gloria Shang

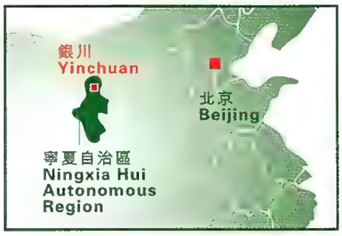
1. **Cruising on the Shahu Lake**
2. **An ancient Yellow River irrigation wheel**
3. **Ruins of the Great Wall**



It was late summer last year when I visited Yinchuan, or the Silver Land, capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in Northwest China. Leaving the Hedong Airport, my eyes feasted on the endless farmlands of corn or paddy rice, criss-crossed with ditches and canals.

"Aren't we in the Northwest, on the Yellow Loess Plateau?" a young woman in our group asked. She had spoken exactly what was on my mind. The scenery implied that we should have been somewhere far south of the Yangtse River. On topographic maps, Ningxia, sandwiched between the Tengger and Mu Us deserts, appears as if it is a dry highland.

Mr. Zhang, the taxi driver, who was obviously very proud of his hometown, explained that the region owes its fertile land to the Yellow River, which has not only brought in a large quantity of fine earth from its upper reaches, forming the vast loess, but also provides plentiful water for irrigation. As early as in the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.), the local people built canals to lead the Yellow River water to their fields. Amazingly, today, some of the ancient canals built during the Qin and Tang (618-907) dynasties are still functioning.



Legacy of an Ancient Civilisation

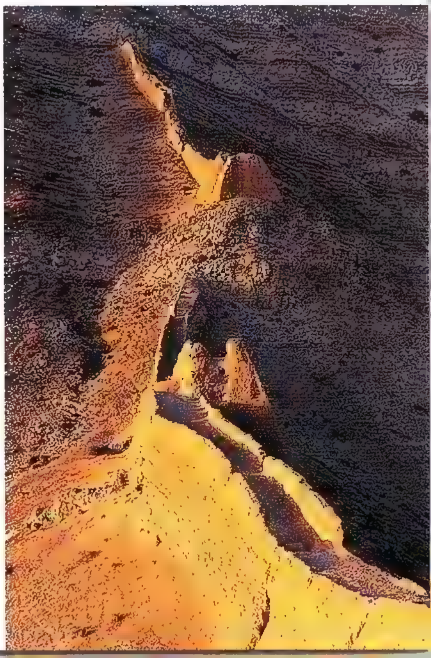
Our curiosity stirred up, we hired a taxi and went to see the Ming-dynasty Great Wall immediately after we checked in the hotel. The remains of the wall lie on the flatland east of the Yellow River and can be reached by a good highway in about one hour. Again, we were bewitched by the wild, open greenery — verdant reed groves and paddy rice fields extending far to the horizon.

On one side of the highway, there was a vast wasteland dotted by numerous newly-built, simple one-storey abodes. These, our driver told us, were the new homes of farmers relocated from remote mountainous areas where the harsh, natural conditions made it very hard to survive without government subsidies. Each family received a government grant to build a house and was allocated a plot of land to farm on a long-term contract. The local government was constructing an irrigation system to pump the Yellow River water to their farmlands. So, this barren, greyish-yellow wasteland was really a land of hope!

Although the Yellow River Bridge at Yinchuan was not imposing, crossing the river stirred up a special feeling in my heart. The Yellow River, which is considered as the "mother river" by the Chinese, appeared neither as turbulent as it was on the upper reaches, nor as muddy as that of the lower reaches. Floating calmly and peacefully through a broad riverbed, it displayed its motherly kindness fully.

The remains of the Ming-dynasty Great Wall lie on a wasteland not far from the Yellow River. Built with rammed earth, this ancient structure has been exposed to the elements for centuries. Large sections have been levelled or have only the bottom two or three metres remaining; here and there are sections standing 10-20 metres high. These solitary earth mounds, seemingly inheriting the heroism from their builders and the gallant soldiers who guarded the frontier steadfastly in by-gone eras, are struggling to survive as witnesses of their glorious past.

Climbing up to the top of a high mound, we immediately felt the strong northerly wind blowing. The wall, extending to the horizon in the east, looked far less magnificent than the renovated sections at Badaling and Mutianyu in



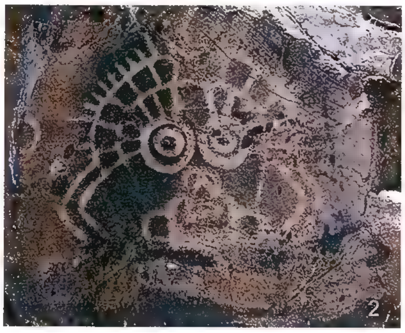
Beijing. Nevertheless it demonstrated its dignity and solemnity through a unique primitiveness. Rather than a "dragon", as the Great Wall is often referred to, it appeared to me like an army of the past times, whose soldiers, despite the dramatic changes in history, were guarding their positions faithfully and quietly — just as they had been doing for hundreds of years.

On the southern side of the wall, shielded from the wind, we sat down and stretched our legs on the fine, and surprisingly warm, yellow earth. Mr. Li, a senior middle school teacher in our group, remarked that besides providing warmth and shelter, this primitive military device had in fact also played an important role in environmental protection. If not for the Great Wall here, the Mu Us Desert north of it would have long ago invaded southward, and there would have been no paddy fields nor reed groves, and probably even wasteland in the suburbs of Yinchuan.

Primitive Cliff Carvings in the Helan Mountains

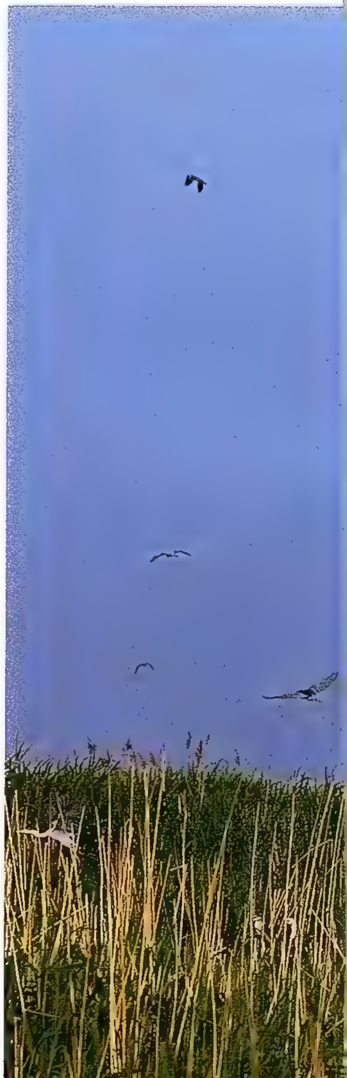
The next day, we drove towards the Helan Mountains in the north on a highway that appeared to be a straight line drawn between the Helan Mountains and the Yellow River. From the foot of the mountain at the end of the highway, we followed a trail for about half a kilometre to the entrance of a valley where we were supposed to see cliff carvings that were several thousand years old. A creek gurgled merrily out of the valley wedged between two grey mountain ranges. There was no road and we walked on the herdsmen's trails, now and then crossing a stream by jumping from one big rock to another. The sky was blue and the water extremely clear, and between them were the sky-scraping greyish rocky peaks. It was a unique charming scene with a sort of northern toughness.

While enjoying the wildness, we all looked carefully around for the cliff carvings. But all the way upstream, we found nothing. So we decided to give up and turn back. However, while walking leisurely on the right bank of the stream, Zhai, a young reporter, suddenly stopped and shouted: "Look! Isn't this a stone carving?" We all stared at the rock he had stepped on and, following the direction of his foot, we saw some roughly carved strokes on the rock surface. No specific image could be recognised but they were obviously man-made scars on the otherwise smooth rock surface. This gave us hope, and we eventually found several carvings in the images of goat, deer, tiger, bird and human figures. Then, to our great joy, on a projecting rock half way up the mountain, we found the picture we had seen in the exhibition room at the valley's entrance. It was something with human features, assumed to be the primitive Sun God worshipped by the early inhabitants. As many people had come to rub copies of it, using ink, the carving had turned dark; I felt great sorrow to see such damage on a precious cultural relic like this.



All the carvings are on the sunny side of the valley, implying that the ancient herdsmen created them while resting and enjoying the sunshine. Yet, so far, it remains beyond modern people's imagination as to how these primitive artisans came to such a spot to make these sophisticated carvings using simple tools.

These cliff carvings are from different periods. The latest are hundreds of years old, from the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911); the oldest are by people from 6,000 years ago. They provide invaluable references for the studies of the history, ethnic groups, religion and customs of the Helan Mountains area. The discovery of these ancient art works drew such world-wide attention that the



1. **Ruins of the royal mausoleum of the Western Xia Kingdom**
2. **A cliff carving found in the Helan Mountains, believed to be the Sun God worshipped by the primitive people**
3. **Shahu provides a paradise for birds.**

International Rock Cliff Organisation held its 1991 convention here.

Xixia Mausoleums: Reminders of Heroic Nomads

It was dusk by the time we arrived at the Xixia (Western Xia) Mausoleums in the west suburbs of Yinchuan, 35 kilometres from the city. Standing at the edge of the wild burial field I was totally overwhelmed by the huge mounds scattered on a vast wasteland 50 square kilometres in area. The great contrast of the crimson rays shed on them and their dark shadows projected on the grassland created an extremely solemn atmosphere.

Western Xia was a kingdom founded by Li Yuanhao in 1038, whose territory included today's Ningxia, northern Shaanxi and parts of Gansu, Qinghai and Inner Mongolia. Its main residents, the Dangxiang people, were a branch of the ancient Qiang ethnic group who migrated from Qinghai and Sichuan in the early Tang Dynasty (618-907). The kingdom co-existed with the Song (960-1279) and Liao (916-1125) dynasties, with good relationships in trade and cultural exchanges, as well as wars, until 1227, when it was toppled by the Mongolians.

Buried here are nine emperors and 140 ministers and members of the royal family. From Tomb No. 8 of an emperor and the four tombs of people buried with him, many artefacts were unearthed, including gold ornaments, pearls, bamboo carvings, stone sculptures and fragments of arms and building materials. Each tomb had been constructed as a complete compound of outer and inner cities with towers, pavilions, tribute hall and burial terrace. Their grandness could have matched that of the Thirteen Ming Tombs in Beijing, but unfortunately, the magnificent graveyard was razed to the ground by the Mongolians and only a few earth mounds remain.

The best preserved of these tombs are the ruins of Yuling and Jialing in the southern section, popularly known as the Twin Tombs. From a distance in the twilight, the two huge solitary heaps appeared very much like the pyramids in Egypt. Sadly, an up-close look showed that these rammed earth tombs' surfaces were honeycombed from top to bottom — a result of hundreds of years of serious erosion. Rather than Egyptian pyramids, they appeared more like the kingdoms of termites in Africa. I walked a circle around each of the Twin Tombs. It was hard to say why I did it. A strong feeling deep inside me urged me to pay tribute to a nation that once wrote a glorious page in history.

Five Colours of Treasures

Ningxia is famous for its five treasures represented by five colours: Red Treasure — matrimony vine fruit — is an important medicinal herb good for the liver, kidney and eyes; Yellow Treasure — licorice root, also a traditional Chinese herbal medicine — is used for killing pain and treating various diseases including cancer; Blue Treasure — Helan stone, which is produced at 2,600 metres high in Helan Mountains — has beautiful green veins on a purple background and is good for making ink stones; White Treasure — lamb skin, most in snow-white but with the black one as the most precious — is famous for its lightness and softness; and Black Treasure — a kind of hair-like moss believed to be very nutritious for the human body — is an irreplaceable ingredient for many famous Chinese dishes.

3

Shahu: A Gem Imbedded in the Desert

On our last day in Yinchuan we had no planned program and we were all tired. After hearing members of a Hong Kong tour group excitedly discussing their visit to Shahu (Sand Lake), we instantly lost our fatigue and decided to hire a taxi to go to Xidatan (Great West Shoal) in Luoping County, 56 kilometres north of Yinchuan, where the Shahu Tourist Area is located.

Again, the highway was in excellent condition, but since the driver was not familiar with the route, it took two hours to get us there. The fascinatingly decorated gate, fluttering colourful flags, loud music and merry crowd made the place look like an amusement park and made us wonder if we had made the right decision. But once inside, I was thrilled by the beauty of the scenery which was far beyond my imagination. It was natural and carefree, but at the same time as charming and elegant as the West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, which is widely recognised for its cultivated beauty. Its name, Sand Lake, actually should be interpreted as "Sand and Lake". There was a vast water area of more than 660 hectares, with luxuriant reed groves dotted here and there; at the far edge of the lake, a range of high sand dunes glimmered, reflecting the golden rays and forming a harmonious contrast with the gem-like green water.

Attracted by the water, we all hurried to the lakeside to have a lake tour first. There was a crowd at the dock but the boat operations were set up well, and quite quickly our boat sped off towards the greenery at the centre of the lake. Now and then, some disturbed fish would leap up and splash water into our boat, causing screams and giggles from the young ladies. Within a few minutes, we found ourselves surrounded by gorgeous, dark green reed groves in all directions. Sailing through the numerous isles covered with reeds, we seemed to be lost in a labyrinth. The channels became very narrow sometimes, and the roaring motor startled the birds nestled in the groves. Some wild geese took to the air, but after making a

1. **The Yellow River winds through the vast land of Ningxia.**
2. **Various projects of reclaiming wasteland and stabilising desert sand have been launched in Ningxia.**
3. **A Hui woman doing paper cutting**

small circle, flapping their huge wings hard to carry their heavy bodies, they landed back at their nests. I saw two fledglings chirping and jumping to welcome their parents.

The boatman said that if we had come earlier in the summer we could have seen dozens of different species of birds, including the swan, white crane and black stork. Tens of thousands of birds would hover above the lake and block out the sun. In spring, many birds come to the lake to breed and the isles would be covered with eggs of all kinds. As the environment is well protected, a natural biological chain has been formed. While the birds feed on small fish, their droppings nourish the fish. Meanwhile, the grasses, reed shoots and plankton are good fodder for both fish and birds. Thus the birds come every year, the fish remain abundant, and the gem of the Shahu Lake keeps shining.

Back on shore, we had lunch at the restaurant in the park. We ordered various dishes made of fish freshly caught from the lake, including steamed bream, baked grass carp and stir-fried slices of big-head. A speciality of the lake, the big-head fish can grow up to a dozen kilograms and its flesh is so fresh and sweet that a dish of big-head is a must for a VIP menu.

We had intended to take the ferry across to the sand dunes on the southern shore of the lake. But with time too short all we could do to ease our disappointment was climb up the winding staircase to the top of the Vista Tower and admire the fascinating panorama of Shahu through the binoculars. Crossing the blue water and green reeds, my focus rested on the other bank of the lake where a desert of 2,000 hectares lay. On the beach many visitors were sunning themselves and a few brave ones were swimming in the cool water. On the sand dunes, some people were climbing up to the top of the dune and sliding down the other side, while camels with riders strode forward leisurely over the dunes. The more I watched, the more regret I felt that we had not come earlier.

On the train leaving Yinchuan for Lanzhou, I told myself I would come back, and next time I would visit the Nanguan Mosque, the ancient pagodas of Chengtian and the Haibo temples, and taste various Muslim snacks on the night market. There are still more fascinating places in Ningxia to visit, such as the 108 pagodas in Qintongxia, the Big Buddha Temple and its 13 grottoes in Zhongning, the Xumi Mountain Grottoes with numerous precious Buddhist sculptures and Shapotou in Zhongwei where I could slide down the soft sand dunes....

Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region

Ningxia is located on the highlands along the middle reaches of the Yellow River, neighbouring Gansu in the west and south, Shaanxi in the east, and Inner Mongolia in the north. The region, with an average altitude of 1,100-1,200 metres above sea level, covers an area of 66,400 square kilometres and has four distinguishable seasons. Ningxia is an ideal summer resort, its average temperature in July, the hottest month, being 24°C. The best time to travel in Ningxia is from May to October.

Human activities in this area can be traced back 30,000 years to the Palaeolithic period. During the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.), troupes were sent here to guard and cultivate the frontier, and so the Great Wall was built and the irrigation system dug. During the Song Dynasty (960-1279) the area was ruled by the Western Xia Dynasty founded in 1038 by Li Yuanhao, chieftain of the Dangxiang tribes. After 189 years coexisting with the Song and the Liao as one of the major powers in this part of Asia, Western Xia was destroyed by Genghis Khan, who expanded his territory towards the Central Plains and eventually established the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was established in 1958, with Yinchuan as its capital. Among the region's population of 5 million, one-third are the Hui people, the Chinese Muslims, the rest being the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Korean, Dongxiang and a dozen other ethnic groups.

Its long history and multiculturalism provide Ningxia with rich tourist resources. With a burgeoning tourism industry, many special travel programs have emerged, including crossing the Tengger Desert riding a camel, touring along the Yellow River on sheep-skin dinghies, and a photography tour on steam locomotives.

Tips for the Traveller

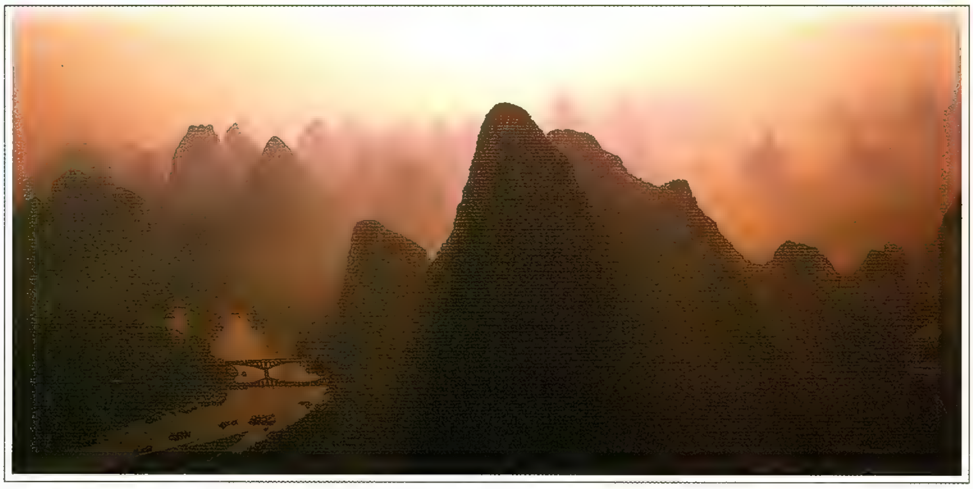
Transport: Yinchuan can be reached by air from Beijing, Xi'an, Shanghai, Chengdu, Wuhan and Guangzhou; or by rail from Beijing, Xi'an, Lanzhou and Hohhot. Buses and minibuses are available in the city, but for scenic spots such as Helan Mountains and Shahu, you need to hire a taxi.

Hotels: Ningxia International Hotel ***: Room rates from 280 to 680 yuan, including breakfast.

Ningxia Dianli Guesthouse **: Room rates from 40 to 380 yuan.

Fengning Hotel **: Room rates from 178 to 328 yuan, including breakfast.

Sun God Hotel **: Room rates from 88 to 138 yuan.



Peaks of Yangshuo Thin morning mist makes mountain peaks into silhouettes. Here, one must be very careful about the aperture. Over-exposure may make the photo flat and boring; under-exposure may end up too dark. Choose an aperture half a degree lower than that for the middle area and one degree higher than that for the distant mountains.

PICTURES OF MORNING RAYS AND MIST

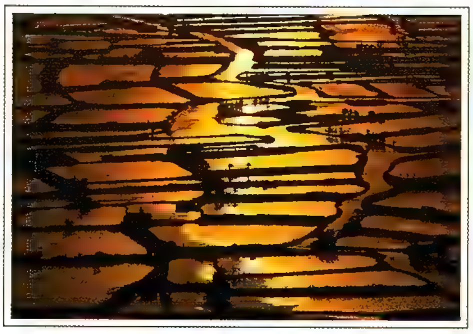
Photos & article by Chan Yat Nin

Landscape photos are often taken at the moment when the natural scenes are shrouded in an unusual atmosphere, mostly, during a sunrise or sunset, in the early morning rays or twilight glows, with mysterious mist or brilliantly coloured clouds, or even under a night sky with a bright moon or twinkling stars. These have the most artistic attraction.

The Amazing Sunrise and Sunset

In ordinary sunlight, the landscape may appear boring. As everything — big or small, major or minor — is equally exposed, the requirements for a successful art work, such as concentration, emphasis and using the beautiful to hide the ugly, may be lacking. During a sunrise or sunset, a large shadow covers the land, making the main objects more obvious and eye-catching while hiding the disordered parts not needed for the picture. At a moment like this, the colours are in strong contrast: when the objects catching the sun rays are in a bright, warm colour, those in the shadow reflect a cold tone. The picture may become even more colourful if the glowing clouds are taken into the photo.

It is not too difficult to take front- or back-light photos with low-angle sunlight when the photo-meter of your camera can be trusted. However, when the sky is covered by clouds, you should not rely on the photo-meter. Under such circumstances, the contrast between the land and the sky is great, and the photo-meter may be "deceived", especially with a bright sun. To avoid this, you should either adjust the aperture to one or two degrees higher or apply a special filter to your lens to darken the sky and narrow the light gap between the sky and the land.



Mulberry Fields and Fishponds Though the sun itself is not included in this poetic South China rural scene, the brilliance of the sun is well expressed through the golden light reflected on the water.

Church Hill, Macau A filter was used so that the contrast between the bright sky and the dark river has been narrowed, and the layers of the clouds better reflected.

I strongly recommend the second method. Many people have spent thousands of dollars buying photography equipment and often neglect the filter, which costs a small amount, but can help solve the difficult problem of light balance. There are many varieties of filters; one is half grey and the other half colourless or lightly coloured, which leaves room for the photographer's creativity — to work out a photo with an orange rising (or setting) sun, for example, by adding another filter of that colour.

Operating on the Background

Travellers like to take photos of scenic spots as a memory of their journey. But more often than not, when they are excited about the rising or setting sun and the clouds on the horizon, they neglect the land scenery. A good photo work needs a combination of the two — a charming landscape reflected in a special natural phenomenon. So an experienced photographer always chooses his ideal scenery first, then waits at the spot for the sunrise or sunset, or other natural scenes to appear.

Of course, a natural phenomenon ideal for photography can be hardly predicted, but skilled photographers can accurately guess how much the rising or setting sun or moon will affect the chosen scenery. If unable to form a complete artistic picture, the photographer would work out one through "operation". First the photo of the landscape is taken, then the film is rewound, and the right moment awaited to add in the rising or setting sun. The key to a successful double-exposure photo is that the light should not be too strong when the landscape picture is taken (better use the photo-meter); and that the second exposure (for the sun and the sky) must be two degrees lower than usual, otherwise traces of your "operation" will be seen.

When taking this kind of "operated" photos, you'd better use a camera with a light-testing function, or use a narrow-angle photo-meter, so as to decide your right aperture based on the different requirements for the sun, moon, sky and earth. Anyhow, nothing can be guaranteed due to the changing light during a sunrise or sunset. A few minutes may require two or three degrees of difference in aperture. The moonlight is more stable. For a full moon high in the sky, you can get an ideal photo by using 100 film, a shutter speed of 1/60-1/25 second and an aperture of 4.

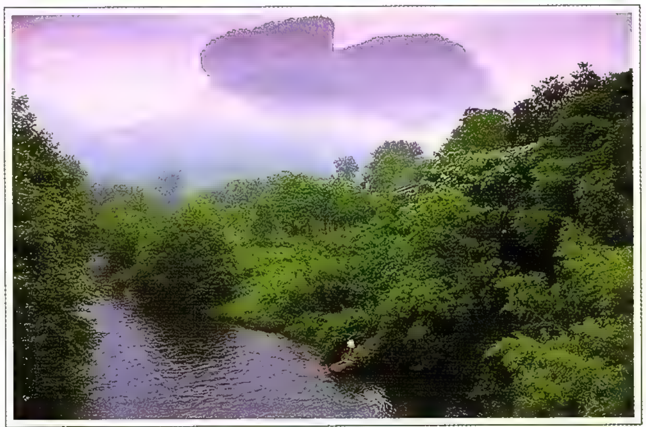
The "operation" can also be done during the printing, by overlapping two different films. I shall not discuss this here as it is a more difficult technique for amateurs.

Tianshan Mountains in Moon Light **When the moon rises in twilight, it adds charm to the landscape. To work out a perfect picture, in this case, the photographer "operated" on the moon so as to give it an ideal angle.**

The Changing Clouds and Mist

Clouds and mist are good friends of photographers because they change the same landscape into varied scenes. The most charming scenery is a "cloud sea" viewed from the top of a mountain, but a good photo of this is very difficult to take. The clouds, usually brighter than the surrounding subjects, often mislead you. You need to set the aperture two or three degrees larger than normal in order to get the mist-enshrouded objects clearly into the picture. The more the scenery is wrapped by the mist, the more adjustment is needed.

Thin mists, though not as magnificent as the cloud seas, are loved just as much by photographers. They cover up some details of certain objects while emphasising the varied layers between different objects, making the scenery into a poetic landscape painting. The most fantastic mist scenes often appear in early mornings and evenings. As the sunlight may disperse the fog quickly, again, timing is very important. The filter for taking pictures of the sun can also be used to darken the distant background and to help obtain a perfect balance of light.



Living at the Foot of Dawang Peak **This photo reflects a beautiful scene on the Wuyi Mountain, with clouds, a stream, and residential houses nestled among luxuriant groves. This picture is also an "operated" one.**

The author travelled westward along the Sichuan-Tibet Highway, to Conch Valley on the eastern slope of Gongga Mountain in Luding County. Conch Valley is a famous glacier park and a national-level scenic area.

Touring Conch Valley on Horseback

Photos & article by Shen Haiqing

The author in a big ice crevice in Conch Valley

Two buildings aroused my interest in Conch Valley. One was the house where Mao Zedong stayed during the Red Army's Long March. It was from here that the main force of the Red Army set out to take Luding Bridge. The other was a Catholic church built long ago.

Riding a Horse for the First Time

To save energy and time, I chose a local and special way of touring Conch Valley — crossing the mountain on horseback. Before that, I had never ridden a horse.

As the horse ambled forward, I was nervous; the saddle was slippery and I was afraid of falling off. In the valley, the path, merely wide enough for the horse, gradually became steeper. On my left was a deep valley, and on my right, a sheer cliff. The horse, however, knew the way and moved steadily forward with ease as if on level ground.

In time, I grew bolder and stayed steady in the saddle even when the horse trotted faster up and down the slopes. Sometimes I even let go of the reins and picked a handful of grass to feed the horse. It really became a joyful experience. It was a great style of travel. The secret of horse riding seemed very simple: it was all a matter of pulling the reins correctly. Riding a horse is far easier than driving a car — at least, it does not require a licence.

After lunch at noon, near Camp No.2, I intended to go to the Hot-Springs Waterfall where the water is 80°C. But the horse groom reminded me there was a time limit.

An Unforgettable Impression

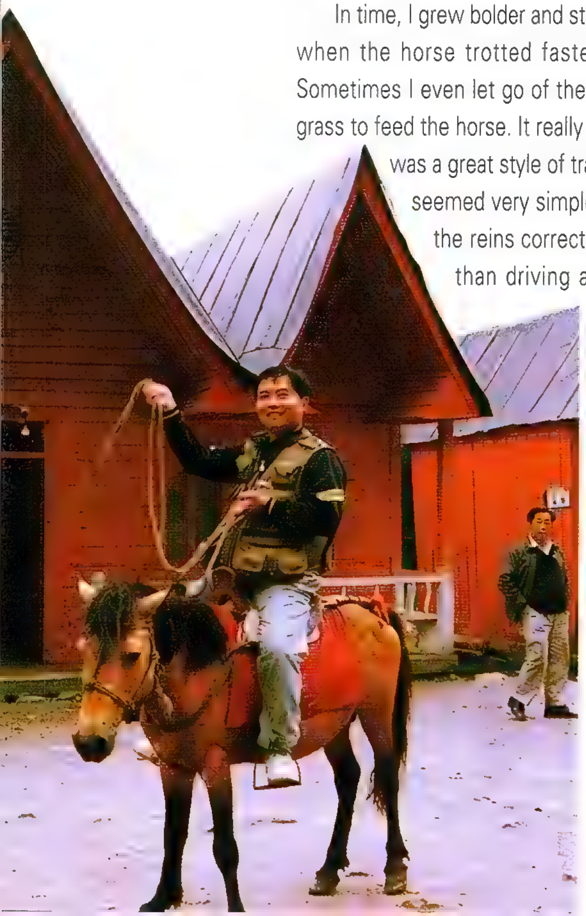
After arriving at Camp No.3 at 2,940 metres above sea level in the evening, the groom went to graze the horse and rest. I stayed in a Continental-style wooden cottage, which looked beautiful from the outside but was poorly furnished, wet and cold inside. After a disappointing supper at the only eating place at the camp, I shot many pictures of the snowy peaks of the Gongga Mountain in the sunset. As I went to bed a group of tourists were barbecuing a whole lamb in the courtyard amidst dancing and singing.

The following day I walked to the glacier sightseeing terrace. The huge glacier extending into a forest is the easternmost glacier in Asia at the relatively low altitude of 2,850 metres. Walking down to the glacier was very difficult. There were large crevices in it and I slipped into one, knocking the lens cap off my camera. From the glacier, I could see four snowy mountain peaks, each more than 6,000 metres high. When the sun came out, the Gongga Mountain, the king of mountains in Sichuan, began to reveal its true face. The sparkling silvery main peak of 7,556 metres pierced the clouds.

A Minor Accident

It was already afternoon when I left from Camp No.3. I rode down the slope with more confidence and at a much faster speed than on the way up. The rain of the day before had created deep, water-filled pits in the road. The horse stepped into one and threw me to the ground before I knew what happened. Luckily, I only hurt my wrist slightly, but my camera went into the mud. From then on, I was very vigilant.

It was dark when I reached Camp No.1 at 1,940 metres. We continued the next day. I was immensely proud of myself when I saw the alarm on the faces of the first-time riders who were going up the mountain, and completely forgot my fall into the mud. Despite that after dismounting I could hardly close or bend my legs, I felt that my tour to Conch Valley was a wonderful experience .



The author arriving on horseback at Camp No.3 in Conch Valley, Sichuan Province

My Experience with Taxis

Article by Lin Changrong

On holidays or business trips, taxis are often a preferred form of transport. Here are my experiences in hiring taxis in several places in China.

Pedicab, another kind of taxi popular in Chinese cities (by Xie Guanghui)

Suzhou and Putuo: Polite Taxi Drivers

At the railway station, taxis line up to wait for passengers. (by Peng Zhen'ge)

Walking out of the railway station in Suzhou, I saw rows of taxis lined up neatly in the taxi parking zone. At the exit several people waved small flags to direct the cars, and passengers queued up for a taxi. All taxis were equipped with meters, fair and convenient.

My taxi driver was very polite and kind. While driving, he introduced places of interest and local customs to us. When we passed a tall building, he slowed down to let us have a closer look. Hearing that it was my first time in Suzhou, he explained everything in detail for me just like a professional guide. When I got out, he suggested I page him if I needed his services again the next day. He knew the way to good business was through good service.

While touring Mount Putuo in Zhejiang, one of China's four major sacred Buddhist mountains, the good taxi service also left a deep impression on me. Though the place is far from the big cities, taxi service was well administered, and no cheating was encountered. It seems that, influenced by the Buddhist culture, people on this piece of holy land still remain simple and honest. At the parking lot on the summit of Mount Putuo, I saw taxi drivers helping the old and young out of their cars. No doubt, the good service has added a bright light to this beautiful scenic place.

Hangzhou: Taxi Drivers' Refusal

It was nearly dark when I arrived at Hangzhou. In the dim light, we saw several taxis nearby, but I was soon disappointed to find that they only took passengers who relied on them to find a hotel. The first question they asked was "Do you need a hotel?" Only those who said "yes" got into the taxi. Some taxis even had a girl sitting in them to attract passengers. I learned that taxi drivers who found a customer for the hotel would get a commission fee of 50 to 100 yuan. Therefore these Hangzhou taxi drivers refused to take other passengers.

Need to Create a New Image

Something should be done when taxi drivers refuse to take passengers or cheat them.

Railway stations, harbours, airports and scenic spots are places where tourists and people on business trips gather. They are also places where unscrupulous taxi drivers cheat passengers. I hope that the government authorities would put up warning posters, strengthen taxi administration, penalise drivers who do not follow the regulations, and hold the administrators responsible. If the administrators neglect their responsibility or even work in collusion with these rogue taxi drivers, or turn a blind eye to these matters, then what is the purpose of administration? Taxi drivers should also be aware of their responsibilities and do a good job.

Taxi drivers should act as a guide and disseminator of the Chinese civilisation. If a city wants to develop its tourist industry, it should have a good taxi administration. This is one good way to leave good impressions on visitors.

Translated by M.Q.

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The airport is often where taxi drivers cheat passengers. (by Peng Zhen'ge)

mailbox

Starting from this issue, we set this page to include letters and comments received from our readers. We welcome all suggestions, praise, criticisms and questions from our readers. And we would also like to thank those who have already written in or responded to our surveys — we truly value your input. Please post, fax or E-mail your suggestions, criticisms and comments to us (details at the bottom of this page).

LETTERS

Your magazine brings so much understanding of China through its outstanding photography and fascinating articles on all aspects of Chinese history, peoples, arts, food and landscape. I prize each issue.

At this time I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate you on the inclusion of an index for the years 1996-1998, and to let you know how much this is appreciated. I hope this feature will become a standard inclusion at year's end. My only regret is that there is no English index for the preceding years.

Virgina C. Burnell
San Jose, California, USA

Editor's comments:

We have received several comments of appreciation for the index (included in Issue 224), and plan to include this useful reference as a yearly feature. We do not at present have an index for previous years. We are, however, happy to help readers with any enquiries on where to find information on specific places or topics in our back issues. Back copies are available for purchase — see Issue 224 or 226 for those from 1997-98. Copies of previous years may be also available, so please enquire.

READERSHIP SURVEY COMMENTS

Readers have suggested we include:

....maps with wider details of the province and location within China so it is easier to locate the destination of the story....

Louise Campbell
Northbridge, NSW, Australia

....information on more hotels and native delicious foods in China....

An Wen
Beijing, China

....longer articles and more information about the history and culture of the people....

Richard Pang
Trumansburg, N.Y., USA

Editor's comments:

Louise Campbell was one of many readers who made the above suggestion about maps. We have taken readers' comments to heart and, as you can see from recent issues, we have made improvements. With our new department starting this issue, called "Executive's Memo", which provides information on hotels and flights relating to a city or area covered in the magazine's articles, we expect that we can satisfy readers' demands. China Tourism Press publishes books on various individual provinces and major cities, for example *Focus on Yunnan, Focus on Xinjiang, Focus on Shanghai*, etc. Besides the in-depth articles, these books provide detailed and sketch maps, information on hotels, tourism administrations and travel agencies, and for the cities, information on shopping centres and restaurants. See Issue 223 for a complete list and ordering details.

Please send your letters to:
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	Kunming Hotel	****	145 Dongfeng Rd. E.	(871) 3162063	(871) 3138220	650051
	King World Hotel	****	28 Beijing Rd. S.	(871) 3138888	(871) 3138656	650011
	Green Lake Hotel		6 Cuihu Rd. S.	(871) 5158888	(871) 5153286	650031
	Holiday Inn Kunming	****	25 Dongfeng Rd. E.	(871) 3165888	(871) 3135189	650011
	Red River Hotel	***	124 Chuncheng Rd.	(871) 3515666	(871) 3515668	650041
	King Town Hotel	***	55 Huancheng Rd. S.	(871) 3333918	(871) 3331128	650041
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	Jinghong Hotel	**	16 Galan Rd. C.	(691) 2123166	(691) 2126947	666100
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Highlights of Issue No. 228

by Xu Guanping

Jinhua-Wenzhou Railway Tour: *The two Zhejiang cities, Jinhua and Wenzhou, are 250 kilometres apart. The railway that links them up forms a marvellous travel route in the province. It takes you no more than two weeks to capture memories of the route's natural landscapes, quaint old architecture, local customs, and famous scenic spots.*

Four mountains in the Central Plains: *It is generally known that the Central Plains of China is a treasure-house of historical relics. Among all the human heritage, Mother Nature also plays a part in adorning the land. We will unveil for you the splendour of this region's bewitching beauty — the towering peaks, the sea of clouds, and the verdant vegetation.*

by Zhang Fushan

Walking into Sêrtar: Located on a solitary plateau in western Sichuan Province, ***Sêrtar*** *is unknown to ordinary travellers. It possesses not only picturesque scenery and simple local customs, but also a* ***Buddhist academy*** *with 5,000 students, of whom more than half are females.*

by Si Yao

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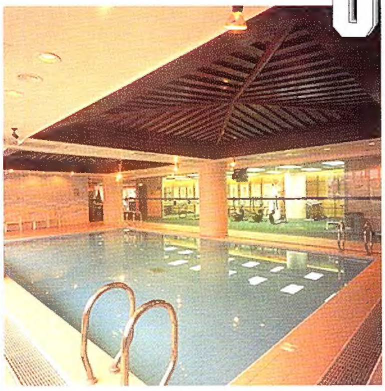

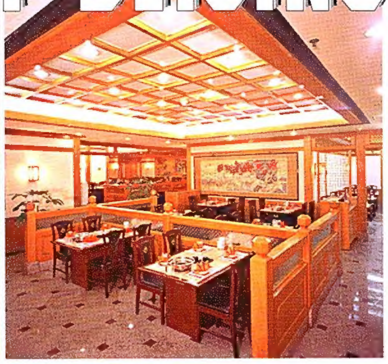

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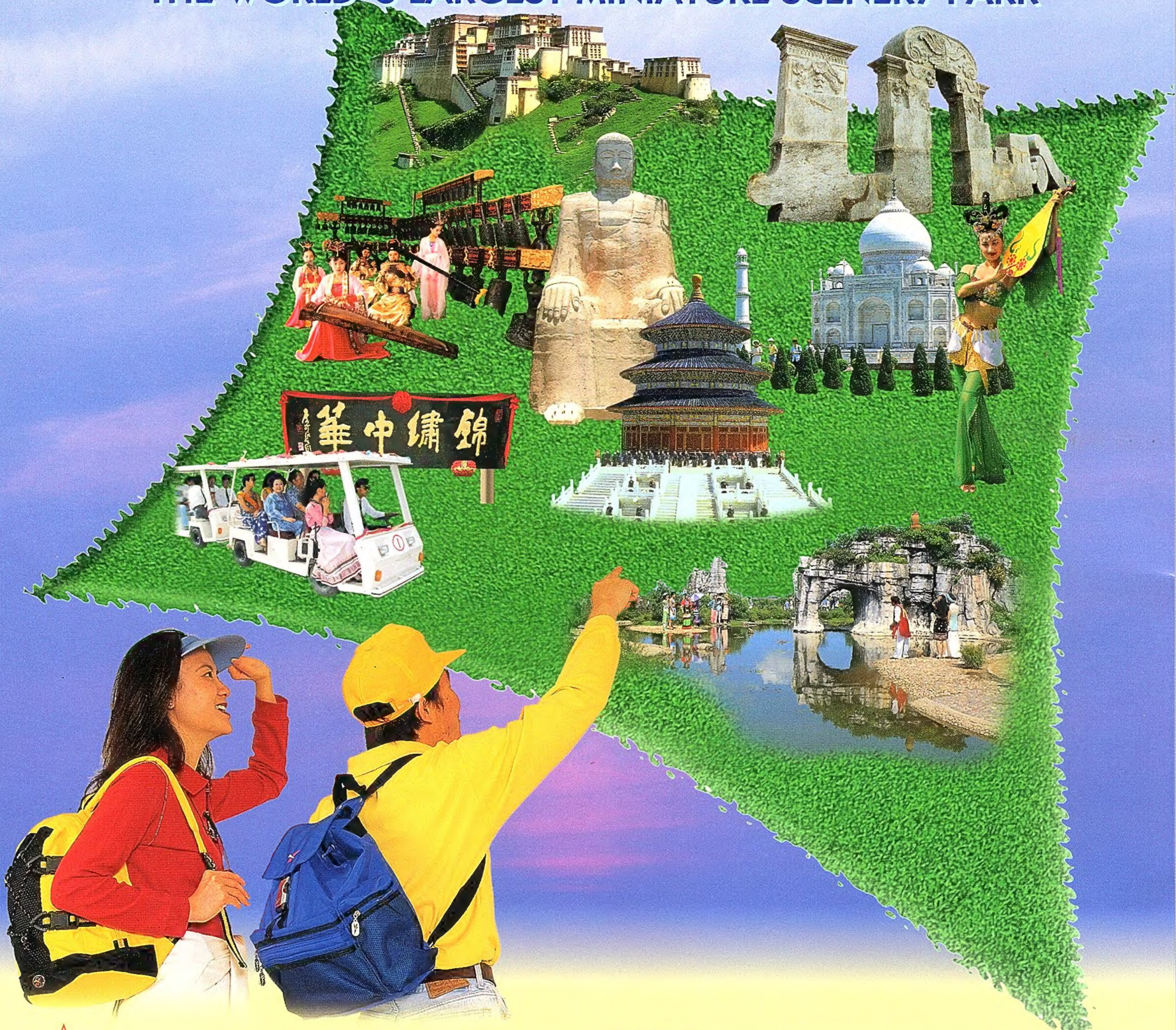

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